The politics of language in Algerian and Moroccan films from 1999 to 2015

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PhD in French and Film Studies

Abstract

After Morocco's and Algeria's independence (1956, 1962 respectively), the governments of both countries sought to replace French with Standard Arabic in public administration, education and the media, and that became the official language. However, other spoken languages are present in both countries, *darija* (colloquial Arabic) and Berber languages, and French is still taught in higher education and a mark of political and economic elites. The countries' multilingualism offers an area for investigating the politics of language in both countries. 1999 was also a turning point for cinema in both countries. Politically, that year marked the end of the civil war in Algeria and, in Morocco, the accession of the new king, Mohammed VI. The year also marked the revival of cinema in both countries.

In examining a selection of films, produced between 1999 and 2015, I will ask the following questions: do films broadly reflect and embrace the countries' multilingualism? Which languages are represented in films and to what effect? What is the relationship between language and gender relations? How is language use perceived by the Algerian and Moroccan public? In seeking to answer such questions, I will examine the use of language in films in relation to three themes key to this thesis: national identity; religion and politics; and sexuality. The question of gender will run through all three themes. Central to the thematic discussion is also close reading and thorough contextualization of the films in relation to the conditions of funding and filming. In this way I hope to pinpoint some of the ways in which language in Algerian and Moroccan films is more than a mere element of mise-en-scène, but an essential part that advances our understanding of these cinemas.

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Abbreviations

AIS: Armée Islamique du Salut

CCM: Centre du Cinéma Marocain

CNC: Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée

FIS: Front Islamique du Salut

FLN: Front de Libération Nationale

GIA: Groupe Islamique Armé

GPRA: Gouvernement Provisoire de la Révolution Algérienne

MSP: Le Mouvement de la Société Pour la Paix

OIF: Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie

PJD: Parti pour la Justice et le Développement

RND: Rassemblement National Démocratique

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Introduction

This thesis explores the politics of language in Algerian and Moroccan films produced between 1999 and 2015. In doing so, it shines light on how cinema has reflected and contributed to the formation of national and private identity through language. Language is understood to play a major role in constructing individual and group identities. It does not act alone but is related to social, political, historical, and cultural factors; these, in turn, shape language.[1]

The role of language in creating homogenous national identities is apparent in both Algeria and Morocco. To some degree they share a history of anti-colonial struggle, though Algeria won its independence later than Morocco, and only after a long and terrible war. This complex history, as well as the area's longer history, has led to different political situations in each country: the maintenance of the monarchy in Morocco and in Algeria the establishment of an 'Arab' and 'socialist' nation, under the ruling of the unique party the FLN from 1962 until 1992. For both countries the national image is an important political matter and studying these two countries in conjunction illuminates the complexity of their relationship to language, national identity and France. In both countries, language has played a historically significant role in constructing national identity after independence. In both countries, a homogenous language, Standard Arabic, was chosen by legislators as the official language despite the countries' multilingualism. In lived experience, in both Algeria and Morocco, *darija* (colloquial Arabic), Berber languages and French are widespread. The linguistic landscape is thus quite similar in the two countries – and

[1] Bernard Spolsky, *Language Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

different from that of Tunisia, a smaller country, which has only a very small Berber minority, and where the Arabic spoken by Tunisians is closer to Standard Arabic.[2] This is one reason, besides the need to strike the right balance in this thesis between range and depth of analysis (both of films and of contexts), that this study is restricted to Morocco and Algeria. Another is that, as we shall see, the politics around language, despite the broad similarity of Algeria's and Morocco's linguistic landscapes, have at times played out quite differently in the two countries – and in both countries, debates over the use of French or Standard Arabic have been significantly more 'dramatic' than in Tunisia.[3] Finally, my geographical focus (including Algeria and Morocco, and excluding Tunisia) is intimately connected with a particular historical focus; in 1999, both Morocco and Algeria saw a revival in filmmaking, as censorship was reduced in Morocco, and Algeria's civil war ended. While Algerian and Moroccan filmmakers were always aware of the possibilities of film as a political and social medium, after 1999 they were more open in addressing political, social and religious issues.

In this thesis, I seek to unravel how various identities – national, cultural, religious, political and sexual – are challenged, contested or confirmed through language in a selection of Algerian and Moroccan films. I explore which languages, of those actually spoken in the countries, are represented and for what effect, and I reflect on how different languages, and their use in specific contexts, are perceived by Algerian and Moroccan publics. I also investigate whether or not – and, if so, to what extent – the films put forward specific linguistic ideologies. If not, do they reflect and embrace the countries' multilingualism? All of these questions are

[2] Grandguillaume, 'L'Arabisation au Maghreb', p.16.
[3] Ibid., p. 17.

addresses by placing the films within the political social and cultural contexts from which they emerged.

Geography locates Algerian and Moroccan films at the crossroads of different trends: Maghrebi cinema, Arab and Middle Eastern cinemas, North African and African cinemas. Often produced with foreign funding, employing foreign crews, with an international cast, Moroccan and Algerian films are also part of a transnational trend in filmmaking. Historically, Algerian and Moroccan films are also linked to a postcolonial context, whereby the French legacy, as I shall discuss, still preoccupies many journalists and critics. Algerian and Moroccan films hence often fall and are studied under one of the above cited categories or in relation to their themes, such as youth unemployment, emigration to Europe, city life, political repression, or women's oppression.[4]

This thesis offers for the first time an original account of Algerian and Moroccan films examined through a new prism, that of language. There has not been such a study across a mixed body of Algerian and Moroccan films in relation to language (and I will later explicit the corpus of the thesis). The films I examine have been analysed paying particular attention to their directors, the themes dealt with, or categories of analysis as defined above. Equally, this thesis brings to light a body of film that has suffered from neglect by scholarly research, particularly those that use *darija*, many of which have been neither subtitled nor widely circulated. Hence, I offer original readings of Algerian and Moroccan films and open new perspectives

[4] See Roy Armes, *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North African Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). Lina Khatib, *Filming the Modern Middle East* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006). Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (Cairo, Egypt; New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2007). Andrea Khalil, *North African Cinema in a Global Context: Through the Lens of Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2008). Florence Martin, *Screens and Veils: Maghrebi's Women Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

for the field of film studies, in which, more generally, language has long been neglected as a topic, particularly in the case of Algerian and Moroccan films.

In the rest of this introduction, I provide a brief history of the politics of language in Algeria and Morocco in conjunction with the countries' political context; a literature review will then locate my work within academic debate. The final section of the introduction outlines my corpus, methodology and the structure of the thesis.

Language and Politics in Algeria and Morocco: Brief Historical Context

Algeria was a French colony from 1830 to 1962; Morocco a French Protectorate from 1912 to 1956; after the two countries gained their respective independence – after seven years of a bloody war in the case of Algeria (1954-1962) – language became closely linked to postcolonial political issues and has continued to play a historically significant role in constructing the two nations' identities. The French historian Gilbert Grandguillaume has argued that independence meant, for both countries, the restoration of Islam and the Arabic language as fundamental features of national identity.[5] Islam and Arabic were first utilised as part of the nationalist discourse prior to independence, in order to rally support among the masses.[6] The governments of both countries sought to replace French with Standard Arabic (a version of Classical Arabic *fusha* الفصحى, which means clear and eloquent) in public administration, education and the media: this constituted the politics of Arabisation, and Islam became the state religion inscribed in the Constitution of both countries.

[5] Gilbert Grandguillaume, 'Arabisation et langues maternelles dans le contexte national au Maghreb', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 87.1 (2009), 45-54 (p. 50).
[6] Ibid.

Over the years, Arabisation became increasingly ideological – moving beyond questions of language. It became a central feature of these newly independent nations, anxious to distance themselves from the colonial experience and to emphasise their cultural specificity as part of the Arabic and Muslim *umma* – that is, the world community of Muslims, a 'central normative concept which appeals for unity across the global Muslim community'.[7] Grandguillaume has observed that Algeria, ironically, adopted what is essentially a French Jacobin ideal, of a national language that symbolizes national unity: the rhetoric of 'one nation, one language'.[8] However, shortly after independence, nothing was 'close' to the political ideal of a 'national' language, because of the countries' linguistic diversity. The most widely used languages, Berber languages and colloquial Arabic الدارجة (*darija*), were not established written languages; and both countries marginalized such vernaculars even if Berbers constitute forty per cent of the population in Morocco, and twenty per cent in Algeria and *darija* and Berber languages share the status of mother tongue, the language of the household with which children grow up.[9]

Darija means in Arabic 'rolling' (so, for example, a bicycle is a *darraja*), as well as 'to be accustomed'. *Darija* is the ever-changing language that has been adopted, with which Algerians and Moroccans are familiar. The pronunciation of *darija* varies geographically across Algeria and Morocco. *Darija* derives its words and grammar from Standard Arabic but not only; *darija* is mixed with French, Ottoman-era Turkish, Berber, and Spanish vocabulary which is adapted and inserted into Arabic grammatical constructions. While *darija* is not a written language, it is

[7] Peter G. Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 17.
[8] Grandguillaume, 'La Confrontation par les langues', *Anthropologie et sociétés*, 20.2 (1996), 37-58 (p. 43).
[9] Grandguillaume, 'L'Arabisation au Maghreb', *Revue d'aménagement linguistique*, 107 (2004), 15-40 (p. 16).

gaining in popularity as the main spoken language of almost all Algerians and Moroccans.

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam have argued that the distinction between a dialect and a language originated in the colonial era, in the 1930s, when unwritten languages were 'somehow unworthy of the term "language"; thus, Europe speaks languages while Africa, for example, speaks "dialects"'.[10] Shohat and Stam refer to the definition of dialect as 'a language without an army […] or we might add without economic or political power'.[11] Agreeing with Shohat's and Stam's view I have chosen to label *darija*, in this thesis, as a language and not a dialect as *darija* is no longer the 'illegitimate national language', and bears political power as I will argue in this thesis through the films analysed.[12]

Indeed, *darija* has been appropriated by the media, cinema, and music. Even Mexican telenovelas, which used to be dubbed in Standard Arabic for distribution in Morocco, are now dubbed in *darija*.[13] Politicians and journalists have begun to ask whether *darija* should be used in schools, instead of Standard Arabic, so that teaching happens in the everyday language rather than a language hardly spoken by much of the population.[14] French, on the other hand, represents a 'linguistic compromise': it remains a symbol of the old colonial power, as well as the mark of

[10] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, 'The Cinema After Babel: Language, Difference, Power', *Screen,* 26.3-4 (1985), 35-58 (p. 54).
[11] Ibid.
[12] Fouzia Benzakour, 'Langue française et langues locales en terre marocaine: rapports de force et reconstructions identitaires', *Hérodote*, 126.3 (2006), 45-56 (p. 46).
[13] Catherine Miller, 'Mexicans Speaking in Dârija (Moroccan Arabic): Media, Urbanization and Language Changes in Morocco', in *Arabic Language & Linguistics*, ed. by. Reem Bassiouney and E. Graham Katz (Georgetown University Press, 2012), pp.169-188 (p. 169).
[14] Mohammed Boudarham, 'Enseignement. La *darija* fait débat', *TelQuel,* 26 November 2013 <https://telquel.ma/2013/11/26/enseignement-la-darija-fait-debat_9703> [accessed 28 March 2014].

the new political and economic elites.[15] In both countries, French is considered a foreign language and does not have an official status, yet it is still the predominant language among the educated and is the language of scientific and technical teaching at university.[16] In 2014, the proportion of Algerians and Moroccans literate in French, as per the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* figures was of thirty per cent and twenty eight per cent respectively.[17]

In Tunisia and Morocco, Grandguillaume remarks, colonisation did not strip the nation of its own identity, so linguistic policies based on French-Arabic bilingualism could be adopted.[18] Because of Algeria's colonial past, this distance was more difficult to maintain. Considered as the second main French-speaking country, Algeria is still not part of the international organisation of the *Francophonie*. Scholar David C. Gordon argues that this is a political stance that Algerian state officials have kept, in opposition to France's hegemony, because they consider *Francophonie* a political rather than a cultural organization. [19] Francophonie was born out of an African initiative, in 1965, when Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba and Senegalese President Léopold Sédar Senghor aimed for 'un Commonwealth à la française' promoting the idea of *francophonie* as a cultural and economical union between French-speaking African countries, and Canada, Switzerland, Belgium and France.[20] By 1966, Senghor gained the support of the *Organisation Commune Africane et Malgache* (OCAM), constituted of the

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[15] Grandguillaume, 'L'Arabisation au Maghreb', p. 19.
[16] Ibid.
[17] OIF, *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* website, <http://observatoire.Francophonie.org/qui-parle-francais-dans-le-monde/> [accessed 20 January 2018].
[18] Grandguillaume, 'L'Arabisation au Maghreb', p. 17.
[19] David C. Gordon, 'The Arabic Language and National Identity: The Cases of Algeria and Lebanon', in *Language Policy and National Unity*, ed. by William R. Beer, James E. Jacob (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Allanheld, 1985), pp. 134-150 (p. 135).
[20] Pierre Alexandre, 'Francophonie: The French and Africa', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 4.1 (1969), 117-125 (p. 119).

newly independent African countries and Madagascar, but Algeria declined to join.[21] Algeria's refusal was rooted in Arab solidarity and the spirit of the Algerian revolution against the French. Even the French government did not stand by Senghor's idea of *francophonie*, fearing accusations of imperialism after the African countries' independence. Yet by 1967, under the impulse of General De Gaulle, France took the lead in the project of *francophonie*, and the adhering countries aligned themselves within the French sphere of influence.[22] Margaret Majumdar argues that Francophonie had become a 'useful adjunct as another forum through which France may assert its influence on the world stage'.[23] Algeria continued to refuse to join, because of the primacy of the French language and its desire to distance itself from the former colonial power and a body whose '*raison d'être* has appeared to be based on the ties and relations established by colonialism'.[24] The official position of Algeria on *Francophonie* has not shifted significantly since Gordon's essay in 1985. Although in 2002 President Bouteflika attended the *Francophonie* summit in Beyrouth, and expressed Algeria's openness to the world, he chose not to adhere to the association.[25] Grandguillaume argues that Algerians are still not willing to participate in the *francophonie*, partly because the place of the French language in higher education is still a thorny issue and initiates heated debates.[26] Linguistic disputes are a recurring topic in Algeria and Morocco, and the

[21] By 1969 the members of the OCAM were: Central African Republic, Chad, Cameroon, Republic of the congo, Benin, Gabon, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Niger, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Democratic Republic of the Congo (known as Zair in 1969), Rwanda.
[22] Margaret A. Majumdar , *Postcoloniality. The French Dimension* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), p. 170.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., p. 171.
[25] David C. Gordon, 'The Arabic Language and National Identity: The Cases of Algeria and Lebanon', in *Language Policy and National Unity*, ed. by William R. Beer, James E. Jacob (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Allanheld, 1985), pp. 134-150 (p. 135).
[26] Grandguillame, 'La Francophonie en Algérie', *Hermès: La Revue*, 3.40 (2004), 75-78 (p. 77).

intensity of conflicts is usually connected to contextual factors that include political, religious and social issues, as my analysis shows in a number of cases. Only recently, in response to demands from political and civil associations, have Berber languages been recognized as official languages in Morocco (2011) and Algeria (2016).

1999, as noted already, was a turning point for Algeria and Morocco, which witnessed political, cultural and social changes. In that year, the civil war in Algeria ended, closing what was known as *la décennie noire*, the Black Decade, from 1991 until 1999. During this period, confrontation between the Algerian army and armed Islamist groups led to the death of over 150,000 civilians.[27] Many civilians were massacred, including writers, artists, journalists, judges and civil servants. Around 100,000 emigrated from Algeria during that period, amongst whom were artists, filmmakers, and teachers.[28]

The civil war began after the cancellation of the first round of the legislative elections in 1991, which the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) party had won, a result that the state and army generals did not anticipate and were not willing to accept. The FIS was formed after the constitutional changes in Algeria in 1989 that allowed for the creation of multiple political parties and the end of hegemony of the ruling party since independence, the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN). The FIS discourse rejected the leadership's foreign ideologies and demanded the establishment of *Sharia* (the holy law) to rule over social, political and cultural

[27] Youcef Bouandel, 'Bouteflika's Reforms and the Question of Human Rights in Algeria', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 7.2 (2002), 23-42 (p. 31).
[28] '840.000 algériens ont quitté le pays sous Bouteflika contre 110.000 dans la décennie 90', HuffPost Algérie, 26 September 2014 <https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com /2014/09/20/algerie-immigration-annee_n_5854048.html> [accessed 16 November 2017].

institutions.[29] The FIS was an extensive coalition of a 'small number of radical Islamists, a few veterans of the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, the traditionally pious urban classes, and vast numbers of alienated youths'.[30]

The victory in the first round saw the FIS garnering 188 seats out of 430 while the FLN only gathered 16 seats.[31] The victory of the FIS not only threatened the hegemony of the army, it also worried part of the population fearing a theocratic Islamic republic. Then-president Chadi Benjedid resigned and a high state committee, mainly composed of military leaders, was created. In January 1992, before the dismissal of Benjedid, women's groups demonstrated against the FIS's disregard for women's rights.[32] Many FIS militants were imprisoned, a state of emergency was declared, and the FIS was banned.

From 1992, calls for armed insurgency against the state and the army were issued by the *Groupe Islamique Armé* (GIA) and the *Armée Islamique du Salut* (AIS). The GIA called for a total war to establish an Islamic state and issued communiqués threatening to kill women leaving their homes without wearing a *hijab* (covering their heads). In the parts of Algeria where the GIA imposed its authority, they banned French-language newspapers, satellite dishes, cigarettes, music festivals, and beauty salons. Cinemas were also the targets of bombs and were closed. Those who refused to follow the rulings of the GIA were considered 'infidels', and the GIA justified violence against them.[33] Many massacres in the

[29] William B. Quandt, 'Democratization in the Arab World? Algeria's Uneasy Peace', *Journal of Democracy*, 13.4 (2002), 15-23 (p. 16).
[30] Ibid.
[31] Robert A. Mortimer, 'Algeria: The Clash Between Islam, Democracy, and the Military', *Current History*, 92.570 (1993), 37-41 (p. 39).
[32] Zahia Smail Salhi, 'The Algerian Feminist Movement Between Nationalism, Patriarchy and Islamism', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 33.2 (2010), 113–124 (p. 120).
[33] Mohammed M. Hafez, 'Armed Islamist Movements and Political Violence in Algeria', *Middle East Journal*, 54.4 (2000), 572-591 (p. 591).

suburbs of Algiers occurred at the hands of the GIA, whereby entire families were decapitated.[34]

The election of president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 1999, and the establishment of the politics of national reconciliation in 2000 – whereby those who had not committed blood crimes could reintegrate into civil life without being prosecuted – led to a period of relative peace and brought an end to violence, although unresolved issues remain open (such as the disappearance of Algerians during the Black Decade and the refusal of the state to further investigate these cases).[35] There were few images of the conflict on Algerian television channels, which were state owned; Algerians turned to French and Arabic satellite channels (such as Al Jazeera) to be informed about the conflict.[36] Few films were made during that period, due to the exile of filmmakers and technicians as well as security concerns. I have included in the corpus of this thesis some of the films that expose how Algerians lived throughout the Black Decade and its aftermath.

A relative peace has reigned in Algeria since 1999. Few political changes have been noticeable. President Bouteflika was re-elected four times (until he resigned in April 2019), and the FLN is the most powerful political party, winning a majority of seats in Parliament in 2014. The Parliament also has deputies form the President's party, *Rassemblement National Démocratique* (RND), a party created to counterbalance the FLN which has been the ruling party since independence, and one of the few Islamic parties, *Le Mouvement de la Société Pour la Paix* (MSP) –

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[34] Hafez, 'From Marginalization to Massacres: A Political Process Explanation of GIA Violence in Algeria', in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. by Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 37-60 (pp. 37-38).
[35] George Joffé, 'National Reconciliation and General Amnesty in Algeria', *Mediterranean Politics*, 13.2 (2008), 213-228 (p. 225).
[36] Larbi Chouikha, 'Satellite Television in the Maghreb: Plural Reception and Interference of Identities', *History and Anthropolgy*, 18.3 (2007), 367-377 (p. 371).

co-opted by the state and participating in the government.[37] Many of the major political figures have not changed since independence, and the state continues to promote the image of the *mujahid* (freedom fighter in the Algerian war for independence) in political discourse and in the few films financed by the Ministry of Culture. Some of the films selected illustrate the political status quo, and how Algerians became detached from political life. However, a contestation movement, composed of youth, men, women across all ages and social classes, emerged in Algeria in February 2019 opposing Bouteflika's candidacy for a fifth mandate. Well attended demonstrations took place across Algeria, and Bouteflika has since resigned; although the political outcome remains unclear, the political status quo is no longer accepted by Algerians who vehemently reject the old ruling elite.

In Morocco, 1999 marked the accession of the new king, Mohammed VI, after the reign of Hassan II (1961-1999) and of what were known as *les années de plomb*. Hassan II's reign was marked by the imprisonment of political opponents, who were tortured, arbitrarily detained or even 'disappeared'.[38] Mohammed VI, Hassan II's eldest son, established a reconciliation committee, the *Instance Equité et Reconciliation* in 2004. This committee examined human rights abuses under his father and aimed at 'restoring the truth' to 'reconcile' (but not to judge).[39] Televised public hearings of the victims who were tortured were organised as well as financial compensation even if the perpetrators were not named or judged.[40]

[37] Frédéric Volpi, 'Algeria versus the Arab Spring', *Journal of Democracy*, 24.3 (2013), 104-115 (p. 104).
[38] Patricia J. Campbell, 'Morocco in Transition: Overcoming the Democratic and Human Rights Legacy of King Hassan II', *African Studies Quarterly*, 7.1 (2003), 38-58 (p. 41).
[39] Susan Slyomovics, 'Morocco's Justice and Reconciliation Commission', *Middle East Research and Information Project*, 4 April 2005.
[40] Ibid.

Mohammed VI also initiated a wave of political and social reforms to create a multi-party system and allowed political Islamic parties to be created, and as a consequence the Islamic party *Parti pour la Justice et le Développement* (PJD) emerged as the leading political party, overtaking the socialist and nationalist parties and winning a majority in Parliament in 2004. Moroccan Historians Malika Zeghal and Khadija Mohsen-Finan survey the emergence and creation of the PJD and highlight that the PJD was not constructed upon a homogenous ideology, but on the concurrent political ambitions of individuals: Dr Abdelkarim Khatib and Abdelilah Ben Kirane.[41] Khatib had ties with the monarchy, as the former doctor of King Mohamed V, and he founded in 1967 a political party 'Mouvement Démocratique et Populaire'. Ben Kirane however was part of an Islamist movement, *Al Chabiba*, created in 1969, that favoured an Islamic revolutionary approach to seize power. *Al Chabiba*'s ideology was inspired by Sayid Qutb's manifesto on political Islam.[42] The actions and ideology of *Al Chabiba* culminated in the assassination of a leftist union member. Ben Kirane decided thereafter that he needed to shift toward a more political approach rather than a revolutionary one, in order to allow for changes to happen. He then co-founded in 1981 *Jam'iyyat al-jama'a al-islamiyya* (The Association of the Islamic Group).

In 1992, Ben Kirane and other members of his association asked for the creation of a political party *Hizb al-Tajadid al Watani* (The Party of the National Renewal), but accreditation was denied by the authorities. Internal divisions in Ben

[41] Khadija Mohsen-Finan and Malika Zeghal, 'Opposition islamiste et pouvoir monarchique au Maroc', *Revue française de science politique,* 56.1 (2006), 79-119 (p. 86).
[42] Sayid Qutb (1906-1966) was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and an Islamist theorist whose book *Maalim fi al-Tariq* (Signposts on the Road) is still influential amongst Islamic movements. The book defines the social and political roles of Islam. Qutb attacked Western ideologies such as democracy, secularism, and also designated the rulers of Islamic countries as Infidels. Qutb's anti-Semite ideas influenced today's Islamist views.

Kirane's movement lead him to approach Khatib who, to resurrect his own political ambitions, agreed to an alliance with Ben Kirane.[43] The creation of the PJD as a party thus resulted from the union of Khatib and Ben Kirane in 1999. The PJD's participation in the political arena was allowed in the light of Khatib's proximity with the *makhzen* (the governing institution centring on the king). The existence of the PJD was however linked to specific conditions dictated by the authorities, and accepted by the PJD, among them the recognition of the King as the Commander of the Faithful, the renunciation of violence, and the promotion of the territorial integrity of Morocco.[44] The PJD thereafter first stamped its presence in the 2002 elections with 42 deputies elected. It directed its criticisms towards socio-economic questions and cultural issues, rather than political matters or the monarchy.

French historian Pierre Vermeren argues that Islamism recomposes and reconstructs an imaginary past, more than it contributes to building a future, though he adds that the impoverished and economically insecure population did not recognise itself in the values of the elites of the so-called 'new Morocco', particularly in its secularisation; hence, religion came to serve more strongly as an affirmation of Moroccan identity.[45] Yet, religion was not used only by the PJD or Islamists to shape Moroccan national identity; the monarchy also used Islam and Arabic to re-define Moroccan national identity. One of the King's prerogatives is to be the guardian of Islamic values. Hassan II inscribed in the constitution, in 1962, the religious duties of the King and confirmed the status of Commander of the Faithful, *Amir Al-Mu'minin*. Zeghal exposes how Hassan II circumscribed the Islamic parties and used his status as a Commander of the Faithful to build upon his

[43] Mohsen-Finan and Zeghal, p. 89.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Pierre Vermeren, *Le Maroc de Mohammed VI: la transition inachevée* (Paris: Découverte, 2009), p. 233.

political authority and to enhance the legitimacy of the monarchy.[46] Zeghal explains that both Hassan II and his father Mohamed V organized various institutions in order to reinforce the monarchy's religious power: mosques were under state control and surveillance, under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and official discourse on the King's religious authority was promulgated through school programmes.[47] The PJD's assumed religious authority encroached on the King's territory, and since the 2002 elections, the PJD aimed at censoring works of art which contravene religious morality. Some of the films discussed in this thesis were met vehemently by some of the PJD members, who criticised the filmmakers, and questioned their religious morals and attachment to Moroccan values.

Mohammed VI also considered economic and institutional issues a priority; he was even called the 'King of the Poor'.[48] He granted more political freedom, promoted constitutional reform and instigated in 2001 the modification of the Family Code, *mudawana*. The new *Mudawana*, finalized in 2004, admitted the principle of equality in marriage between men and women, including the removal of discriminatory text such as the wife's legal obligation to obey her husband. The PJD was opposed to the new *mudawana* as they considered the reforms to be inspired by Western secular ideas, while the old Family Code was constructed on traditional religious principles.[49] After the Islamist bomb attacks of 2003, directed at upper classes and Jewish locations, the PJD's reputation was weakened, and it did not

[46] Zeghal, *Islamism in Morocco: Religion, Authoritarianism, and Electoral Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2008), pp. xii-xiii.
[47] Ibid., p. xv.
[48] Abdelilah Bouasria, 'The Second Coming of Morocco's "Commander of The Faithful": Mohammed VI and Morocco's Religious Policy', in *Contemporary Morocco: State, Politics and Society under Mohammed VI* ed. by Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Daniel Zisenwine (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 37-57(p. 38).
[49] Mohsen-Finan and Zeghal, p. 89.

oppose the reforms. The new *mudawana* promoted on the international scene the image of a modern king who was developing his country.

By way of comparison, the situation for Algerian women has hardly changed since the 1984 Family Code, which is vigorously contested by women's associations. Since 1984, war veterans and younger feminists have united to call for an abrogation of the Code, coming together to protest against legislation that privileges men over women. The Code has undergone some amendments in recent years: from 2005, women were no longer legally obliged to obey their husbands; in 2014, a decree announced compensation for women raped by terrorists during the Black Decade. In this thesis, I will discuss films that expose gender inequality and women's struggles to overcome the limitations imposed by laws and social norms within a patriarchal society.

In 1999, cinema was revived in both countries. With the end of the era of terrorism in the 1990s, Algerian directors could resume work, and many returned from France where they were in exile. While Algerian cinema was state funded until the 1980s, with over 200 cinemas and 80 films produced, funding and production structures were quasi inexistent in 1999.[50] Formerly state-funded Algerian cinema became a predominantly privately-funded cinema, described by Kamel Salhi as a change 'from state cinema to *auteur* cinema'.[51] Algerian filmmakers mainly sought funding from foreign bodies such as the French *Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée* (CNC) while the Algerian state mainly funded historical films on the Algerian war as mentioned above. In Morocco the reverse situation occurred, the

[50] Fayçal Sahbi, 'Algérie: un cinéma sans cinémas est-il possible ?', *Huffpost*, 11 September 2017 < https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/faycal-sahbi/algerie-un-cinema-sans-ci_b_17962392.html> [accessed 20 October 2017].
[51] Kamel Salhi, 'Visualising Postcolonial Cultural Politics in Algeria: From State Cinema to *cinéma d'auteur*', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 13.4 (2008), 441–454.

Centre du Cinéma Marocain (CCM), the funding body, was reinvigorated by the state, which led to the production of more state-led films reaching 20 feature films produced per year. National and international film festivals flourished as well and one of the many examples is the *International Film Festival of Marrakech,* initiated in 2001 and presided over by the King's brother.

Algeria counts 41 million inhabitants, and Morocco 36 million with forty-five per cent of the population under 25. Youth unemployment is an acute problem in both countries reaching twenty five per cent, leading the youth to despair of their lives and to try to emigrate, a theme that I will further discuss in this thesis.[52] For all their shared characteristics, Algeria and Morocco also have a history of political disagreements, as the historian Benjamin Stora acknowledges in labelling them 'frères ennemis'.[53] The non-resolution and perpetuation of the conflict in the Western Sahara remains a source of tension in the region and constitutes the main area of discord between Algeria and Morocco, stirring strong reactions from both parts. Algeria supports the independence of Western Sahara; a former Spanish colony where Spanish administrative control was relinquished in 1975 and a joint administration between Morocco and Mauritania was established (Mauritania withdrew from the territories in 1979). The Sahrawi nationalist movement, *Polisario*, then proclaimed the independence of the *Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic,* a decision that was followed by Algeria's recognition of the new state, while Morocco claimed its ownership of the land. This led Morocco to break off diplomatic relations with Algeria in 1975. Despite the United Nations' intervention,

[52] Trading Economics website, For Algeria see <https://tradingeconomics.com/algeria/youth-unemployment-rate> and Morocco see <https://tradingeconomics.com/morocco/youth-unemployment-rate> [accessed 20 October 2017].
[53] Benjamin Stora, *Algérie, Maroc: histoires parallèles, destins croisés* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose: Zellige, 2002), p. 5.

the question is still acute, and Morocco is backed by French diplomacy which considers that 'Western Sahara is an integral part of the Kingdom of Morocco', while Algeria supports the Sahrawis considering that self-determination is one of the fundamentals of Algeria's foreign policy.[54]

Recent political disagreements between the countries also led to the closure of terrestrial borders in 1994. The closure was triggered by the attack that four French nationals of Moroccan origin launched against a hotel in Marrakech. Moroccan authorities accused Algeria's army services of having backed the attacks. Morocco imposed visas on Algerian visitors, and the Algerian authorities responded by closing the border between the two countries. Heated debates in the Algerian and Moroccan press ensued after the incident, and are still recurrent, whereby each party accuses the other of distorting their country's image. The strained relations between Algeria and Morocco restrained the circulation of goods and people, as well as cultural exchanges, affecting cinema. Algerian films are rarely available to the Moroccan public, either in cinemas or on television, and vice-versa. France, the French institutes in both countries, and internet remain the means to access both Algerian and Moroccan films.

Language in Film: Review of Literature

Having established a number of basic points regarding Algerian and Moroccan politics and the use of language in the two countries, I will summarise the existing research on the role of language in films. This overview will provide context for the conjunction at which my thesis is located. It is within sociolinguistics, and journals

[54] Yahia H. Zoubir and Karima Benabdallah-Gambier, 'The United States and the North African Imbroglio: Balancing Interests in Algeria, Morocco, and the Western Sahara', *Mediterranean Politics*, 10.2 (2005), 181-202 (p. 195).

such as *Gottopol* and *Multilingua*, that attention has been initially paid to language in films, taking films as a realistic representation of linguistic choices, registers and a reflection of cultural and social changes. Socio-linguists have also investigated the political implications of using one language rather than another in films (the use of English in Québécois films for example), examining 'choices in film dialogue in terms of their underlying linguistic ideologies' as 'the film directors' stylistic choices interact with dominant language-ideological discourses, endorsing, opposing or in some way negotiating them'.[55]

Hence, my discussion of the films will also be informed by sociolinguistics, particularly by the treatment of language and ideology informed by the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and the sociolinguist Jannis Androutsopoulos. Bakhtin and Androutsopoulos are particularly important because they recognise the connection between language and ideology, or the ideology *of* language. Bakhtin sees language as 'never neutral but always ideologically charged'.[56] John L. Kijinski describes how Bakhtin considers language to be 'the site where ideological conflict is fought out as well as recorded'.[57] For Androutsopoulos, 'language ideology' is 'the sets of beliefs and evaluations of language structure, language use, and language society/ relationship'.[58] Androutsopoulos draws a correlation between language and ideology: how we use language shapes our understanding of society, at the same time as the society in which we live shapes the language that we use; language and social relations are thus inherently connected. While analysing films, I will

[55] Jannis Androutsopoulos, 'Introduction: Language and Society in Cinematic Discourse', *Multilingua*, 31.2-3 (2012), 139-154 (p. 149).
[56] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. and ed. by. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: Texas, 1981), p. 204.
[57] John L. Kijinski, 'Bakhtin and Works of Mass Culture: Heteroglossia in *Stand by Me*', *Studies in Popular Culture*, 10.2 (1987), 67-81 (p. 68).
[58] Androutsopoulos, p. 142.

investigate the ideology associated with the languages spoken as well as the effect of language choice on the film's reception and overall message. While discussing issues of language and gender I will also provide an overview of some of the most relevant concepts in the field of sociolinguistics on language, gender, and power as these concepts are at the core of my textual analysis of these films.

While post-colonial theory and literary studies have paid attention to the politics of language in literary texts, few such studies exist in film scholarship. Why is this? As the scholar Kamilla Elliott has observed about adaptation studies, words 'suffer a pervasive neglect in film history, criticism, and theory' because the discipline has mainly paid attention to the technical side of film-making that analyses the role of light, montage, editing, and so on, in the construction of narrative.[59] Elliott argues that Sergei Eisenstein's early definitions of editing and montage as 'film speech' and 'diction' have led to film studies neglecting diegetic language.[60] Eisenstein's essay 'Film Language' (1934) established the analogy in academic criticism that montage is the 'language, diction, syntax, and speech' of film.[61]

The work of the French film theorist Christian Metz continued the association between film and language. In his influential essay of 1964, 'Le Cinéma: langue ou langage?', Metz argued that cinema is structured like a language and that linguistic paradigms can be applied to films; shots can be likened to sentences and films to *parole*.[62] Metz grounded his work in Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic

[59] Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press 2003), p. 10.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Serguei Eisenstein, 'Eh! On the Purity of Film Language', in *The Eisenstein Reader*, trans. by Richard Taylor and William Powell, ed. by Richard Taylor (London: British Film Institute, 1998), pp. 128–133 (p. 129).
[62] Christian Metz, 'Le Cinéma: langue ou langage?', *Communications*, 4 (1964), 52-90.

theory, the basis of semiotics. Saussure rejected the view that words derive their signification from the objects to which they refer; instead he claimed that words derive their signification from the mental association between 'a concept and a sound-image'.[63]

Afterwards, Metz linked cinema to psychoanalysis in his 1977 book *Le Signifiant imaginaire: psychanalyse et cinéma*, which draws on Freudian and Lacanian theory to argue that viewers do not experience film as reality, nor as a dream, but as a state that is in the middle.[64] Furthermore, the viewer does not identify with the protagonist but with the camera and becomes the omnipotent subject who perceives all the action, experiencing voyeurism and fetishism. Elliott situates the neglect of language within film with the emergence of this type of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in the 1970s, that emphasised the 'visual and scopic cognitive processes in film viewers'; and she argues this view is still influential within film studies.[65]

Nevertheless, in the 1980s, attention to words, voices, and sounds in films increased. In particular, the work of French composer, film-maker and critic for *Cahiers du Cinéma* Michel Chion opened new areas of investigation into sound in films. Chion's 1982 *La Voix au cinéma* established the importance of voice and challenged image-centred approaches to film theory. Chion suggested that sound gains power when it is disembodied (on the telephone, as a voice-over, etc.), and he defined the concept of 'acousmêtre', as the combination of *acousmatique* (invisible sound) and *être*. Acousmêtre is a diegetic sound that is not related to the character

[63] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Roy Harris, ed. by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye (London: Duckworth, 1983), p. 16.
[64] Metz, *Le Signifiant imaginaire: psychanalyse et cinéma* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1977).
[65] Elliott, p. 81.

who speaks, a voice that is heard without its source appearing onscreen which is thus invested with mysterious, supernatural power.[66]

In his subsequent book, *Le Son au cinéma* (1985) Chion explored how the emotional tone of a film is expressed through sound and music, and how they affect the viewer's perception and understanding of the image.[67] Chion argued that sounds emphasise objects within the frame, and that film sound is an art of rendering ideas, emotions and intents. Though Chion paid more attention to the voice and silences than to language itself, he established the importance of diegetic and non-diegetic sounds in films that intersect with images to create a multi-layered audio-visual experience. Chion's sound theory is key to my thesis, as I too pay attention to sounds and silence as constituents of language.

In 1985, Shohat and Stam's 'The Cinema after Babel: Language, Difference, Power' opened areas of investigation into other languages than English. Shohat and Stam pointed to the hegemony of English in Hollywood films of the 1940s, arguing that, 'presuming to speak for others in *its* native idiom, Hollywood proposed to tell the story of other nations not only to Americans, but also for the other nations themselves, and always in English'.[68] English became not only the dominant language in films but also the language of 'prestige' that projects the 'self-confidence of its speakers'.[69] As Shohat and Stam put it, the 'Indians' of classic Hollywood Westerns, denuded of their own idiom, use pidgin English, a mark of their inability to master the 'civilized' language'.[70] In many Hollywood and French films of the 1930s and 1940s, the local, national language is ignored, or an alien

[66] Michel Chion, *La Voix au cinéma* (Paris: Éditions de l'Étoile, 1982).
[67] Chion, *Le Son au cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, Éditions de l'Étoile, 1985).
[68] Shohat and Stam, p. 36.
[69] Ibid. p. 38.
[70] Ibid., p. 54.

language is used. For example, in *Pépé le Moko* (Dir. Julien Duvivier, 1937), where Jean Gabin is a criminal on the run from the *Métropole* who hides in the Casbah of Algiers, Arabic is only an 'indecipherable murmur' while French is the main language.[71] Shohat and Stam called for attention to the power play between languages in films: which language dominates, and which one is marginalized? Shohat and Stam's approach is crucial to the study of films in my thesis, as I will not only investigate the languages used, but also consider which were set aside, and which were predominant, and thus their relation to power.

By 2000, research on language in films progressed further and Sarah Kozloff's seminal *Overhearing Film Dialogue* opened new areas of research. Kozloff looked at dialogue in Hollywood films of the 1940s, including Westerns, screwball comedies, gangster films, and melodramas. Like Elliott, Kozloff argues that film's visual aspects have always been the focus of film theorists and directors, while dialogue – as part of a script and linked to a character's performance – has not been deemed worthy of attention.[72] Kozloff connects the bias against dialogue in much theory and scholarship to the anxiety that words will compromise the independence of cinema as an art form unto itself: an emphasis on language might render film a subdivision of theatre or literature.[73] Kozloff also relates the dismissal of dialogue in film studies to a cultural association of talkativeness with femininity and of action with masculinity – and a bias in favour of the latter. [74]

Kozloff analyses film dialogue and its quantity, the length of speaking turns, the use of slang, and how and when the characters talk. She observes that film

[71] Ibid.
[72] Sarah Kozloff, *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p. 15.
[73] Ibid., pp. 28-29.
[74] Ibid.

dialogue has changed from standardized English for stars in the 1940s to the more colloquial language in the 1960s and 1970s, alongside the appearance of low budget independent productions.[75] Kozloff emphasises that dialogue is, of course, generally scripted and should not be taken for real speech, stating that dialogue is 'written and rewritten, censored, polished […] and performed' and 'apart from cases of improvisations, the words have been written, rehearsed'.[76] Kozloff also highlights the process of scripting film dialogue whereby it is 'recorded, edited, mixed, underscored, and played through stereophonic speakers with Dolby sound'.[77]

Kozloff argues that since film dialogue is scripted and polished, it may convey the author's views and may in some sense be addressed towards the film's spectators. Analysing the address of Ted Kramer to the judge in *Kramer vs Kramer* (Dir. Robert Benton, 1979), whereby Kramer denounces a society that would not grant him his son's custody, Kozloff observes that Ted's language is addressed to the viewer conveying 'an authorial commentary'.[78] Film dialogue can also call for actions as in Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent* (1940) when a soldier exhorts the viewer to fight the Nazis.[79] Language in films also conveys 'social/moral/political messages by the use of allegory or irony'. [80] For example, *Force of Evil*'s dialogues (Dir. Abraham Polonsky, 1948) are an allegory on the evils of capitalism.[81] Kozloff advances that the viewer is able to draw on the irony or allegories embedded in film dialogues by connecting the on-screen characters with the diegesis and the wider political and social context.[82] In this thesis, I will examine language in order to

[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., p. 58.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., p. 59.
[82] Ibid., p. 61.

decode authorial messages and the underpinning political and moral implications embedded in film dialogues.

While it is true that filmic speech adheres to conventions, language in films nonetheless reflects the language of the time. Kozloff rightly observes that dialogues 'go beyond the script', so when analysing films, one must ask, 'Who gets to speak about what? Who is silenced? Who is interrupted?'.[83] Kozloff also points out that the study of film dialogue entails the understanding and mastery of the language, as scholars have 'cavalierly assumed they could analyse films in languages they don't know'. [84] I would argue that this affirmation goes even more strongly for films in non-European languages as translation needs to be truthful and complete, and as Kozloff states one must not rely on subtitles because these cannot accurately render what the original language conveys, since many elements are lost – not least 'curses, repetitions, antiquated diction, regional accents'.[85]

For Kozloff, subtitles remove crucial elements linked to the language and its national specificities, including jokes, wordplay and irony.[86] Kozloff's point about subtitles and how to approach film dialogue is key to this thesis. First, as mentioned above, I have selected films in languages that I speak and understand (*darija*, Standard Arabic and French), and I have excluded films in Berber. Second, I have whenever possible explained the wordplay and humour, especially when lost in the subtitles. Third, I have paid attention to who says what – but also to who is silent.

While Chion's early books explored sounds and voices, his later work, *Le Complexe de Cyrano: la langue parlée dans les films français* (2008), more clearly assesses the importance of studying language and accents in French films. Chion

[83] Ibid., p. 27.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid., p. 26.

observes that the various French dialects remain absent from French cinema. The few accents that remain are folklorised – for example, the Southern French accent (midi-accent) in Marcel Pagnol films, *banlieue* speech or Parisian slang.[87] Chion also examines the emergence of multilingual films in French cinema in his more recent work *Words on Screen* (2017) and argues that multilingualism marks a 'greater concern for realism'.[88] Chion also rightly observes that subtitles render the understanding of film dialogue in foreign language difficult, as it 'demobilizes our hearing, to the point where we not only don't understand the meaning but don't even distinguish the language being spoken at a given time – all the languages seem to be a single one.'[89] Chion's observation is key to my thesis, as when subtitled, Standard Arabic and *darija* become indistinct to the non-speaker of the languages, and subtitles do not render the degree of formality of each language. Agreeing with Chion, the use of different languages reflect more accurately Algeria's and Morocco's multilingualism, yet it does not always reflect realism as when French is too present in Algerian films and stirs heated debates surrounding its use which I will later discuss.

While over the decades, research has focused on English speaking films, foreign languages in film have been marginalised or standardised. The scholar John Kristian Sanaker has expanded the research on the French language to include its interaction with other languages. In *La Rencontre des langues dans le cinéma francophone: Québec, Afrique subsaharienne, France-Maghreb* (2010), Sanaker analyses in over a hundred films the interactions of French and English in

[87] Chion, *Le Complexe de Cyrano: la langue parlée dans les films français* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 2008), pp. 102-103.
[88] Chion, *Words on Screen*, trans. and ed. by Claudia Gorbman (New York; Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 148.
[89] Chion, *Words on Screen*, p. 146.

Québécois cinema, French and African languages in African cinema and French and Arabic in French films that dealt with the Algerian war (1954-1962). Like Kozloff, Sanaker points to the scarcity of film theory on language in films. Sanaker argues that the study of language in film has been concerned with *what the protagonist says*, but little attention has been paid to *the language chosen by the protagonist*.[90] In relation to *La Bataille d'Alger* (Dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966), Sanaker observes that French and Arabic translate the balance of power between the French army and the Algerian population. The use of French by the military emphasises that French cannot be the language of Algerians, and the French the military speak is composed of orders and interjections thus enhancing the colonial power of the army.[91]

The 2016 collection *The Multilingual Screen: New Reflections on Cinema and Linguistic Difference* is another example of a decentred approach to examine language in cinema. The book assembles articles from Tunisia, Italy and Japan and offers a historical perspective on multilingualism in films. In its introduction, film scholars Tijana Mamula and Lisa Patti trace the politics of language in film to 'monolingual politics' that have suppressed and excluded minority languages and dialects in most modern nation-states.[92] Thus, in some countries, cinema has advanced the 'country's linguistic evolution toward a firmer monolingualism' (which is the case of Algerian cinematic policies in the 1970s as I explain in Chapter One), and language in films has either marked the hegemony of a language or 'cultural protectionism'.[93] In 2017, Gemma King highlighted the importance of

[90] John Kristian Sanaker, *La Rencontre des langues dans le cinéma francophone: Québec, Afrique subsaharienne, France-Maghreb* (Paris, Montréal: Harmattan; Presses de l'Université Laval, 2010), p. 157.
[91] Ibid., p. 57.
[92] Tijana Mamula and Lisa Patti, 'Introduction', in *The Multilingual Screen: New Reflections on Cinema and Linguistic Difference*, ed. by Tijana Mamula and Lisa Patti (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), pp.1-18 (p. 5).
[93] Ibid.

examining multilingualism in French cinema in *Decentring France: Multilingualism and Power in Contemporary French Cinema*. King demonstrates how, when other languages are heard in French films (e.g. Arabic or Tamil), these languages do not serve only to mark realism. Multilingualism is rarely 'arbitrary'; instead, King writes, 'these languages challenge the hegemonic position of French in French films'. [94] King's findings will be tested in this thesis in relation to the status of Standard Arabic in Algerian and Moroccan film, and whether Standard Arabic is hegemonic and contested in its position as the official language by *darija* and French.

The review of the scholarly literature has highlighted a growing body of research into language in film. Over the years, there was also a shift in interest within film studies towards the study of film production, circulation and audiences, hence moving away from diverse hermeneutic approaches. In this thesis, my attention to language straddles these two critical approaches; language as part of the film mise-en-scène needs to be examined; language as part of the circulation and reception of films needs to be considered as well. This body of research also asks questions about which languages have been set aside, and what those forgotten languages reveal about the inherent postcolonial, political, cultural or social issues at stake. From this review, I am led to the following questions: how does language construct a character's identity? What social, gender and political issues do filmmakers engage with in making decisions about language? Whom do they allow to speak, whom do they silence, and which languages do they privilege? Through these questions, this thesis will suggest that choices about language in Algerian and

[94] Gemma King, Decentring France: Multilingualism and Power in Contemporary French Cinema (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp. 3-5.

Moroccan films reflect the needs of narrative construction and encode the film's critical standpoints.

Corpus and Methodology

The corpus of films studied in this thesis is the result of a selection, which I will proceed to explain. Moroccan film production is more substantial than the Algerian one, with 100 Moroccan films produced in comparison with 30 Algerian films between 1999 and 2015. [95] However, I wanted my study to be closer to an even balance between the two nations and decided to choose 9 Algerian films and 11 Moroccan films. In addition to periodisation and national identity, an essential category in choosing the films was their language: whether multi- or monolingual. To contrast language use in films, I divided my corpus between films that are mainly in French, films that are solely in *darija* (including those using slang *darija*) and others that mix French, *darija* and Standard Arabic. This selection allows me to examine whether there is a thematic difference between films made in French and those in *darija*. Because I am also concerned with the critical and commercial reception of the films, and investigate box office results, my corpus includes a range of productions: films that were popular with audiences, auteur films, controversial films as well as those that received little attention.

My selection also took into account the type, age and aesthetic project of the film directors as well as their gender. Again, I have worked on the basis that a wide

[95] Ameziane Farhani, 'Étude: marché du cinéma et de l'audiovisuel en Algérie. Écrans en chiffres', El Watan, 28 June 2014 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/ elwatan/462769> [accessed 12 January 2016]. 'Bilan cinématographique 2014', CCM website, <https://www.ccm.ma/inter/bilans/9-bilan.pdf> [accessed 12 January 2016].

variety of films offers the best opportunity to form an overview of the politics of Moroccan and Algerian films of this era, and I selected films made by fifteen directors; however, when possible I included more than one film by the same director to illustrate changes of genre and narrative. For example, Nadir Moknèche's trilogy, included in this thesis, spans from 2000 until 2006, and follows the political and social changes in Algeria, as well as a change in Moknèche's aesthetics from comedy drama to film noir. Similarly, I have included two films made by the Moroccan Nabil Ayouch and the Algerian Merzak Allouache. Ayouch's films, *Les Chevaux de Dieu* (2012) and *Much Loved* (2015) expose the life of those at the margins of Moroccan society, respectively those living in the slums and prostitutes in Marrakech. Allouache's films are emblematic of the political changes in Algeria: *Le Repenti* (2012) is concerned with the politics of national reconciliation while *Les Terrasses* (2013) examines the life of Algerians in the aftermath of the 'Arab Spring'.

In the same way that I wanted to balance Algerian and Moroccan films, I aimed at a reasonably balanced selection amongst male and female directors, again in the interests of a diversified perspective. Hence, I selected films made by two Algerian female directors (out of three female directors who have produced films between 1999 and 2015), and films made by three Moroccan filmmakers (out of six female directors who have produced films between 1999 and 2015). I also wanted to select directors from different generations.[96] Stylistically, the selection presents different forms as well: some films experiment with form, for example Tareq Téguia's *Roma ouella n'touma*, with a disjointed narrative, while others use the

[96] Allouache, Sahraoui, Bachir Chouikh, Okacha Touita, Aziz Salmy, Latif Lahlou, Saad Chraibi, and Hassan Benjalloun were born before their countries' independence. Marrakchi, Kilani, Lakhmari, Bakir, Téguia, and Ayouch belong to the after-independence generation.

tropes of film noir, comedy and drama, and differ in terms of narrative structures and acting methods, mixing professional and non-professional actors.[97] I have also deliberately excluded the wider Maghreb as well as films made in France by Maghrebi filmmakers as their work is frequently analysed in the abundant literature on *cinéma beur* and *émigré* cinema.[98] I have also excluded from my corpus films that mainly use Berber languages because I do not have expertise in the language; but I take up the opportunities offered by the corpus to discuss the political and cultural issues around Berber languages.

Given my focus on the relationship between film and language, close reading and thorough contextualisation, informed where necessary by works from the field of sociolinguistics, are central to the thematic discussion of language in films. I examine dialogue and the different languages used, as well as music, diegetic sound and the elements 'omitted' from subtitles in films as defined by Shohat and Stam: 'background conversation, radio announcements and television commercial […] written materials such as posters, marquees […] and newspapers'. [99] My close reading of films analyses language, but not in isolation. I analyse language while also focusing on the films' images through the examination of mise-en-scène, camera work and editing. My close textual analysis is contextualised within the historical background of the films, the political issues at stake and the social issues that contribute to understanding a scene's events. I also present, where available, the conditions of the film's production and public reception.

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[97] My selection of directors was guided in part by the availability of the films at the time of my study. Accordingly, some directors who have emerged in the last two years are absent from this thesis: the Algerian Sofia Jemai and the Moroccan Ilian El Faris, for example.
[98] See the works of Will Higbee, *Post-Beur Cinema: North African Émigré and Maghrebi-French Filmmaking in France Since 2000* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), Carrie Tarr, *Reframing the Difference*: *Beur and Banlieue Filmmaking in France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).
[99] Shohat and Stam, p. 36.

For this research, I have gathered materials from different sources. Researching the films' funding, distribution, and box office, I visited the *Centre du Cinéma Marocain* (the CCM, in Rabat) in 2014; the archives however did not yield much material; more information is available online on the website of the CCM. I also inquired about viewing figures for Algerian films at the *Centre Algérien de la Cinématographie* (Algiers) in 2014, but there were no such statistics as the centre was focussing on safeguarding archives from the 1960s until the 1980s. I have gathered statistics when available, taking as a primary source the statistics of the CCM as well as Algerian and Moroccan newspapers and magazines written in French and in Arabic (The Moroccan *TelQuel*, *L'Opinion, Le Journal Hebdo*, *Akhbar el youm*, the Algerian *El Watan*, *Le Matin*, *Le Soir d'Algérie*, *Al Akhbar*). There are few cinema journals in both countries; I was able to consult the short lived Algerian quarterly *Asaru* (founded in 2007 by the Amazigh film festival commission), and to buy in Morocco issues of the monthly *Aflam 21* (founded in 2013) and of *CinéMag*, which was founded in 2008, issued as a bilingual (Arabic/French) monthly magazine in 2010, and ceased to exist in 2011.

The Bifi Library (Bibliothèque du film) and the Bnf (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) in Paris offered a valuable source for articles on Algerian cinema of the the 1980s as well as information on Algerian and Moroccan films released in France. I have also visited the *Institut du Monde Arabe* (Paris) where the only books available on Algerian cinema related to the Algerian war. The British Library in London provided me with infinite resources of books written on Algerian and Moroccan cinemas from the 1960s to the 1980s, in French, Arabic and English. Finally, the films of my corpus are mainly available on the internet (YouTube), while others were only available at the time in DVD format on sale by French

retailers (*Roma ouella n'touma*, *Sur la planche*, *Barakat!*). I was also able to purchase many of the Moroccan films as bootlegged DVDs in Morocco. Algerian films, on the other hand, cannot be found as bootlegged DVDs due to an enforced copyright law that prevents them from being copied (while Hollywood blockbusters are widely available).

Because this thesis deals with multilingual films, I have provided titles in French, Arabic, and English. The first time a film is mentioned, its French title is given, and its Arabic title and English translation; subsequently I will only provide its French title. These films are released primarily under both titles in French and Arabic. Director and year of release are also included; the country of production is mentioned in my comments on the conditions of funding. The use of Arabic when transliterated conforms to the pronunciation of Arabic spoken in Algeria and Morocco, and I have tried to be consistent in the spelling of names. I have also transcribed in Standard Arabic religious expressions when used in films, to emphasise the difference with *darija*. When dealing with material in French, I have provided film and book citations in their context, untranslated.

Organisation of Chapters

Through my selection of films, a corpus emerged that variously reflects, diverts or obscures the social, political and economic realities of the two countries. As I further detail, some of the films illustrate important aspects of the countries' tensions and changes; others support social norms. To better investigate language use in the films, the need became clear to group the films by theme, rather than chronologically, as I want to provide fresh insight into how language is used in relation to specific themes. The main themes that emerged are national identity, religion, politics and

sexuality – all underpinned by the theme of gender. This thematic organisation also allows my discussion to move from the public to the private sphere, and to highlight the different implications of the study of language in relation to these issues. Some of the films will be analysed across different chapters, when the themes are entangled.

Chapter One is introductory and addresses questions of language, national identity and national cinema in Algeria and Morocco. I expand on the politics of Arabisation and the political status of the various languages used in the two countries. I also provide an account of the history of cinema in both countries and demonstrate that language has been essential in defining national identity and national cinema in Algeria and Morocco. I historicize how national cinema, in general, has been defined and then situate Moroccan and Algerian cinema within debates over transnational cinema – not least in relation to Maghrebi cinema, the relation to France, 'world cinema', and concepts of diasporic and 'accented' cinema. I also explore the debates over the funding of Algerian films by the French funding body the CNC.

Chapter Two analyses four films in relation to language and national identity: two of the films included in this chapter were deemed controversial upon their release: *Marock* (ماروك, Dir. Leila Marrakchi, 2005) and *Viva Laldjérie* (لالديجيري فيفا, *Viva Algeria*, Dir. Nadir Moknèche, 2004). These films were seen by the press to distort the image of the nation by exposing taboo subjects such as inter-faith relationship in *Marock* and nudity and sexuality in *Viva Laldjérie*. The chapter also addresses what it means to be Moroccan, through *Où vas-tu Moshé?* (اوين رايح يا موشيه؟, *Where Are you Going Moshé?,* Dir. Hassan Benjelloune, 2007), and what becomes of the definition of national cinema when it is transnational through its

production, cast and director (*Goodbye Morocco,* وداعا المغرب, Dir. Nadir Moknèche, 2013).

Chapter Three deals with politics, alongside religious violence, religious discourse and gender. It is further subdivided, beginning with three Algerian films dealing with the Black Decade and its repercussion on the population, men and women: *Rachida* (رشيدة, Dir. Bachir Chouikh, 2002), *Barakat!* (بركات, *Enough!*, Dir. Djamila Sahraoui, 2006) and *Morituri* (مورتري, Dir. Okacha Touita, 2007). These films explore the traumatic events Algerians had lived through and attempts at understanding these events, and the role of language in expressing the trauma lived. I contrast and compare the attitudes of young people in Algeria and Morocco and their use of language in *Casanegra* (كزانجرة, Dir. Norredine Lakhmari, 2008) and *Roma ouella n'touma* (روما أولى انتوما, Dir. Tariq Téguia, 2006). This part examines how slang *darija* opens avenues for youth to express their disillusionment with the societies they live in. I then discuss Islamic extremism and the politics of Algerian national reconciliation in *Le Repenti* (التائب, *The Repentant*, Dir. Merzak Allouache, 2012) and the run-up to Casablanca's 2003 terrorist attacks in *Les Chevaux de Dieu* (خيول الله , *God's Horses*, Dir. Nabil Ayouch, 2012). I point out the importance of Standard Arabic linked to religious discourse and its influence on the private sphere. Finally, I explore the changes that occurred in 2007, in Morocco in relation to religion, gender and social class, after the election of the PJD, by way of *Amours voilées* (حجاب الحب, *Veiled Love*, Dir. Aziz Salmy, 2008) and *Islamour* (إسلمور, Dir. Saad Chraibi, 2008). I contrast the reception of these two films and their use of French and Standard Arabic to highlight the tight links between Standard Arabic and religious discourse.

Chapter Four investigates the representation of gender and sexuality and its connection to language and power. The chapter attempts to isolate the ways in which gendered identities are shaped by language – and how such constructions may reflect and bear on the roles deemed acceptable for and by the Algerian and Moroccan audiences. The chapter focuses also on the situations of men and women across different social classes. *Much Loved* (أزين إلي فيك, Dir. Nabil Ayouch, 2015) and *Sur la planche* (على الحافة, *On the Edge*, Dir. Leila Kilani, 2011) offer new perspectives on language – particularly slang and crude language – as well as materialism and social emancipation.

Much Loved was censored and criticised for its display of prostitution and nudity. *Les Jardins de Samira* (سميرة فالضيعة, *Samira's Gardens*, Dir. Latif Lahlou, 2007) dealt with extra-marital affairs and male impotence, and *Agadir Bombay* (اغادير بومباي, Dir. Myriam Bakir, 2011) tackled prostitution; however, these two films were widely accepted by the Moroccan public. To help explain why reactions to the films were different, the chapter will examine how language creates norms of gender and sexuality, and how it differently empowers men and women. Finally, I examine the situation for men and women in Algeria and the way that language reflects social change in *Le Harem de Madame Osmane* (حريم مدام عصمان, *Madame Osmane's Harem*, Dir. Nadir Moknèche, 2000), *Viva Laldjérie* (Dir. Nadir Moknèche, 2004), *Délice Paloma* (ديليس بالوما, Dir. Nadir Moknèche, 2007) and *Les Terrasses* (السطوح, *The Rooftops*, Dir. Merzak Allouache, 2013). My conclusion attempts to answer the questions raised in this introduction, to highlight how language is still a 'potent cultural symbol', and why the study of language matters in relation to Algerian and Moroccan films.[100]

[100] Shohat and Stam, p. 52.

Chapter One: Contextualising Language, National Identity and National Cinema

La Bataille d'Alger (1966), directed by the Italian Gillo Pontecorvo, is one of the most internationally renowned 'Algerian' films. It depicts the resistance of the Algerian population in the Casbah, an old quarter of Algiers, during the titular battle in 1957, based on the memoirs of former combatant Yacef Saadi. Despite its Algerian associations, the film was a truly transnational production. Shot on location in the Casbah with a team of Italians, Belgians, and Algerians, the script harnessed *darija* and French, and has been described as an 'authentic mixture of spoken Arabic and French' that would 'reach, and ring true for those audience members in Algeria who were illiterate'.[101] The film was co-produced by Saadi's short-lived company *Casbah Films*, and received Italian funding as well as military costumes and props from the Algerian state.

La Bataille d'Alger represents the pinnacle of a period of nationalist nostalgia in Algerian cinema, during which the Algerian war was often glorified. However, its transnational production means that Algerian film critics still do not consider *La Bataille d'Alger* an Algerian film; instead, they consider it an Algerian-Italian co-production.[102] *La Bataille d'Alger* offers a clear example of how difficult it is to define national cinema. What, then, are the criteria through which films might be admitted into a definition or corpus of national cinema? Who would make such

[101] Nicholas Harrison, 'Pontecorvo's Documentary Aesthetics: *The Battle of Algiers* and the Battle of Algiers', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 9.3 (2007), 389-404 (p. 390).
[102] M.B, 'La Guerre d'Algérie sur les écrans', *El Watan*, 7 November 2004.

decisions: domestic critics, scholars or international reception? Is it even helpful to consider *La Bataille d'Alger* an Algerian film? What is at stake in such categorisations?

To address these questions, I will investigate the concept of 'national cinema' as it is used in academic debate and as it has changed through different periods. I will explore the cinemas of Algeria and Morocco and attempt to define what the concept of national cinema has come to mean for these countries. I argue that language is an important constituent of national cinema and will therefore examine the language of these cinemas at successive historical stages. Ultimately, I argue that the notion of national cinema, which as we will see has been widely contested, is still a valid one in relation to Algeria and Morocco, and that language plays an important role in giving shape to these national cinemas.

As discussed in the introduction, in Algeria and Morocco, language relates closely to complex national identities. Geographically located in North Africa and the Maghreb, these countries are culturally part of the Arab-Islamic world. As former French colonies, they were also subject to the imposition of the French language and French cultural policies. All of these contexts affect the relationship between language and the constitution of a national cinema. I identify three major politico-linguistic phases of Algerian and Moroccan cinemas:

1. Cinema under French colonial rule (1900–1956/1962);

2. Cinema in newly post-independent countries (1956/1962–1980s); and

3. Cinema in the globalised era (1980s–present).

During French colonial rule, most of the films produced in Algeria and Morocco were in French, when not silent, and mainly directed by French directors and aimed at French audiences in the *métropole*. In Morocco, an attempt to produce

Moroccan-French films in Arabic was initiated in 1952 but, as small-scale folkloric films, they failed to compete with the widely exported films of the highly developed Egyptian cinema industry.

In the second period, cinema became involved in post-independence politics, which aimed, in Algeria, to construct a national anti-colonial narrative and to promote Algeria abroad. Standard Arabic, the official language of independent Algeria, became a political tool to unify the population and inscribe it into a larger Arabic and Muslim identity. Although a few feature films were made in Morocco in the immediate post-independence period, mainly documentaries and short films, cinema was used with two key purposes: to promote the image of the newly independent nation; and to practically inform and educate its people. There was no debate about the use of language in Morocco. The films used *darija* only. Berber languages remained in both countries a subject of political debate, as I will elaborate in the section on national language in Algeria and Morocco.

The third period, the globalised era, coincides with political turmoil in Algeria, and more political freedom in Morocco with the end of the reign of Hassan II. As mentioned in the introduction, a shift in film financing followed the political changes and had a dramatic effect on film production and the number of films produced in the two countries. In the globalised era, both countries witnessed the return of exiled directors and the influx of internationally-trained directors. The instability of the political situation in the Middle East over the last two decades also allowed Morocco to attract transnational film crews and financing, which increased the funding of the CCM.[103] These fluctuations in Algerian and Moroccan cinemas

[103] Siona Jenkins, 'An Oasis of Foreign Film Making in the Desert', *The Financial Times*, 4 November 2017, p. 3.

will be addressed in this chapter through critical discussions of transnational cinema, diasporic filmmakers and, in particular, Hamid Naficy's concept of 'accented cinema'.[104] My conclusion will attempt to determine how far one can talk of Algerian and Moroccan 'national cinemas', the place of language therein, and the relationship between these cinemas to broader academic debates about national and transnational identity.

Language and National Identity

Prior to summarising different theoretical approaches to national cinema, I will examine the politics of language and national identity in Algeria and Morocco. Language has been a site of political struggle in both countries, as well as a marker of cultural identity. While Morocco was a French protectorate retaining its political and monarchical systems, Algeria was under French territorial control. The Algerian war for independence (1954–1962) was a war to define the future nation, including the language it would use. Algeria's linguistic politics, born out of the war of independence, aimed to achieve 'national homogeneity'.[105] Yet the ironies of this ambition soon emerged: the Algerian leaders, who fought for independence, harnessed the French language to foster international attention.

In both Algeria and Morocco, monolingualism was an important means to cultivate a single religious-nationalist ideology. Algeria and Morocco sought to become reincorporated into the Arab and Islamic world, the *umma*, a concept of nationhood beyond the individual nation. As a core preoccupation of nationalism,

[104] Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
[105] Peter A. Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 17.

establishing a unified language went beyond expelling traces of colonialism. 'Arabisation', the politics of promoting Standard Arabic as the official language of education, administration and media, began in Algeria in 1976 and in Morocco in 1980.

Arabisation aimed to promote a language as well as a political vision of a stable cultural identity and Berber languages and *darija* were rejected from the formation of this stable new identity. Grandguillaume further explains that post-independence political leaders in favour of Arabisation, considered *darija* as a 'degraded' form of Classical Arabic, and aimed at teaching Standard Arabic in schools as a spoken language mainly to replace *darija*.[106] However, Standard Arabic remained unfamiliar for much of the population in both nations; and has not become a spoken language.

The Moroccan sociolinguist and Berber activist Ahmed Boukous identified the following different languages in Morocco – a hierarchy that applies to the Algerian context:

1) Standard Arabic, the official national language, whose status is afforded by its role in the Islamic religion.

2) *Darija*, vernacular Arabic, considered as the maternal language of the non-*Amazigh* population, which operates as a *lingua franca* in the national space, used commonly by Arabic-speakers and *Amazigh* speakers.

3) *Amazigh*, historically the first language of Morocco; it functions as a native language. Berber languages are usually named *Amazigh* (singular masculine noun) or *Tamazight* (singular feminine noun).[107] *Amazigh* is almost always used as

[106] Grandguillaume, 'Arabisation et démagogie en Algérie', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 1 February 1997.p. 3.
[107] Paul A. Silverstein and David Crawford, 'Amazigh Activism and the Moroccan State', *Middle East Report*, 233 (2004), 44-48 (p. 47).

the equivalent of Berber but with a political connotation: the common definition of *amazigh* is 'free man', so the term connotes political demands for liberty expressed by Berber movements in Algeria and Morocco. The origin and meaning of the word, however, is far from certain according to sociolinguist Salem Chaker, who believes the supposed etymological definition of the term as 'free man' to be an 'undue extrapolation of accurate, regionally specific data' – that is, the meaning may previously have been associated with high caste, noble Tuaregs rather than free men.[108]

4) French, perceived as the language of 'social mobility, modernity, enlightenment', which remains the language of the Moroccan ruling class, though the class structure of Moroccan society has evolved significantly in its postcolonial period.[109] French is still the medium of higher education in universities (medicine, technology, biology but not the humanities which are taught in Standard Arabic) as well as used in administration alongside Standard Arabic and in the media (radio, newspapers, television).

The role of Berber languages in both countries has changed with their political situations. Berber identity itself remains fluid, and many names for Berber languages are used by scholars and the media. Boukous explains that the main variants of Berber languages in Morocco are *Tarifit*, *Tamazight* and *Tashelhit*.[110] Each language is associated with an ethnic group located in three different areas: *Tarifit* designates the Rif in Northern Morocco; *Tamazight*, the Atlas region of

[108] James McDougall, 'Myth and Counter-Myth: "The Berber" As National Signifier in Algerian Historiographies', *Radical History Review*, 86 (2003), 66–88 (p. 68).
[109] Ahmed Boukous, *Société, langues et cultures au Maroc: enjeux symboliques* (Rabat: Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines, 1995), p. 31.
[110] Ibid.

central Morocco; and *Tashelhit*, the Chleuh in south-western Morocco, and the southern Moroccan coast.[111]

In Algeria, similarly, the sociolinguist Mohamed Benrabah defined the following Berber languages in relation to a specific geographical spread: *Tamashek* is the language of the Tuaregs of the Sahara; the Mozabites, who live in central Algeria, speak *Mzab*; the Chaouia, who live in Eastern rural Algeria, speak *Chaouia*; Kabyles, who live in eastern coastal Algeria and represent about two-thirds of the Berber-speaking Algerian population (totalling six million), call their mother tongue *Kabyle* or *Takbaylit*.[112] Berber languages are oral languages, mainly unwritten even if the *Tifinagh* script is used. Tifinagh is used by the Tuaregs and said to originate from the Libyan era (640 BC-146 AD), although there is little proof of its use at the time, and it has never been widely used subsequently.

[111] Ibid., p. 23.
[112] Mohammed Benrabah, 'The Language Planning Situation in Algeria', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 6.4 (2005), 379–502 (p. 480).

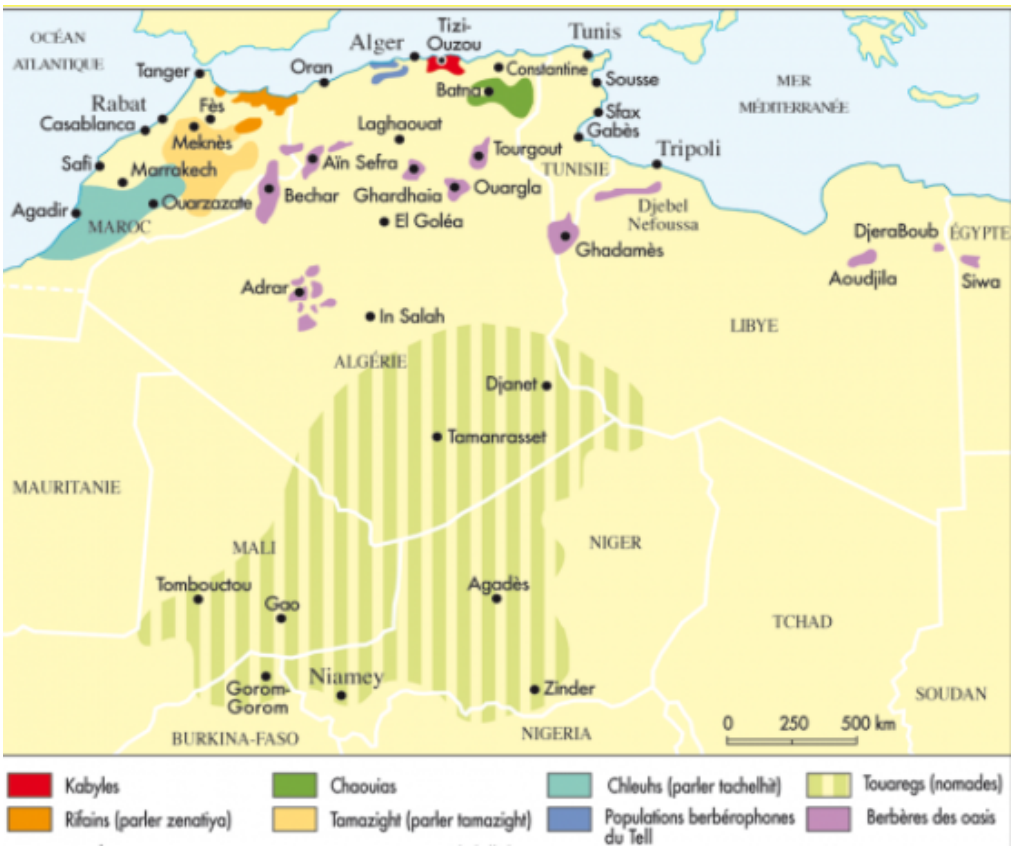

Figure 1. Map to illustrate the Distribution of Berber population in North Africa and their languages (in French)[113]

The distinction between Berbers and Arabs requires context because it is used and reused at different times. When the French ruled in Morocco and Algeria, they promoted what is known as the 'Berber myth', the idea that Berbers were more willing to be civilised and were natural allies of the French because they resisted Islam and the adoption of Arab traditions after the original Arab invasion.[114] In this context, the distinction was primarily a colonial political tool to divide and rule. The historian James McDougall traces the distinction between Arabs and Berber back to the writings of Arab historians working after the conquests of North Africa in the seventh century.[115] The name *al-barbar* was used by the Arab conquerors to

[113] Sabih Yaïci, 'Les Langues Amazigh en voie de disparition (I)', *Le Matin d'Algérie*, 20 February 2017 <http://www.lematindz.net/news/23421-les-langues-amazighes-en-voie-de-disparition-i.html> [accessed 28 April 2017].
[114] McDougall, p. 68.
[115] Ibid., p. 83.

designate the North African indigenous population. In turn, *al-barbar* as a term constructed this heterogeneous population as a homogenous group.[116] The name *barbar* was taken from the Greek and Latin name that distinguished the Barbori tribe from the many other tribes of North Africa (Libyans, Numidians, and Maauri). The Arab conquest of the seventh century spread Islam, and most of the tribes remained non-speakers of Arabic; some of these tribes were arabised linguistically in the tenth and eleventh centuries, while others remained Berber speakers.[117] McDougall explains that spreading Arabic language was mainly a political tool used to subjugate tribes, rather than to educate or enhance Islamic observance; indeed, at that time Islam was not equated with Arabs or the Arabic language.[118]

In the 1930s, the Algerian nationalist movement of the *ulemas* – a group of Muslim religious scholars in Algeria – rejected Algeria's Berber past and called for a return to Standard Arabic. Ibn Badis, a member of the *ulemas*, defined Algerian nationhood as follows: 'Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language and Algeria is my country'.[119] The *ulemas* had a vision of nationhood that was detached from local linguistic realities, linked instead to the Arab 'nation' under Islam. The abovementioned motto influenced the cultural politics of Algerian nationalism, and the Algerian war and, by extension, 'official' culture. The tendency to associate the Algerian nation with the Arab world by harnessing Standard Arabic would persist in independent Algeria.

In relation to Morocco, Mickael Bensadoun argues that the Moroccan nationalist movement under the influence of Arab nationalism in the 1940s similarly

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[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Bruno Étienne, 'Les Dispositions islamiques du droit public maghrébin', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 1 (1966), 51-80 (p. 52).

presented Berbers as potential allies of the French.[120] The persistence of this belief relates to the Royal Decree of the 1930s, *dhahir*, which allowed Berber regions to sit under French jurisdiction, and to use their customary law rather than Moroccan Islamic laws.[121] However, the customary law was not specified, and the Berber tribes were not clearly defined. The Protectorate settled the question by declaring 'Berbers' to be the tribes that had submitted after the campaigns of 'pacification' carried out by the French in the King's name – that is, the Berbers were defined without relation to any cultural identity.[122]

The recognition of Berber languages was part of the political agenda of activists, who themselves identified as Berbers, in Algeria and Morocco. In Morocco, Berber groups were staunchly repressed by the future King Hassan II in 1958, especially in the Rif in Northern Morocco, a focus of anti-colonial resistance and anti-monarchical protests. In Algeria, pro-Berber protest was rife throughout the 1970s, but culminated in 1982 when general strikes and demonstrations led to the arrest of many activists, mainly in the Kabyle region. Other Berber Algerian minority groups, speaking a range of non-Arabic languages – such as the Chaouia or the Tuaregs – were more politically co-opted, and were awarded key positions in the post-independence military. Although *Amazigh* has now been recognised, protests have not ceased in Algeria, and they remain closely connected to demands for improved social justice and youth employment.

In a significant shift, after years of political protest, the 2016 Algerian constitution now recognises *Amazigh* as a national and official language alongside

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[120] Mickael Bensadoun, 'The (Re) Fashioning of Moroccan National Identity', in *The Maghrib in the New Century: Identity, Religion and Politics*, ed. by Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Daniel Zisenwine (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), pp.13-35 (p. 28).
[121] Ibid.
[122] Benrabah, p. 406.

Standard Arabic.[123] Yet this recognition only means that *Amazigh* will be taught in schools and used in the media; it will not be used in administration or for official statements.[124] Five years previously, the 2011 Moroccan constitution also recognised *Amazigh* as an official language and a 'common heritage to all Moroccans without exception'.[125] Yet this progress is not without its own issues of co-optation. A number of *Amazigh* activists have refused such co-optation and have decried the state's actions as a 'folklorisation' of Berber culture, implying that the state was promoting Berber languages and cultural practices, such as dance, craft, and music, while ignoring specific political demands.[126] Bensadoun points out that Moroccan Arab nationalist intellectuals in Morocco as well as leaders of Islamic parties were opposed to the official recognition of the *Amazigh* language and identity because it endangered the unified image and identity of Morocco under Arab tutelage.[127] All of this shows that language is still very much at stake in Moroccan politics and is closely controlled by the state as a means to balance power between different political parties and groups.

Darija, though widely used in Algeria, was not at the heart of debates even when Arabisation policies were strengthened in 1997 during the Black Decade. French was completely removed from administration, court laws, official discourses even if laws are written in both languages. These changes aimed at reinforcing the political power and ideology of Algeria as an Arab Muslim country and counter

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[123] 'Journal officiel de la République Algérienne. No.14', Secrétariat général du gouvernement website <http://www.joradp.dz/ FTP/jo-francais/2016/F2016014.pdf> [accessed 12 April 2016].
[124] Ibid.
[125] 'Royaume du Maroc. Secrétariat général du gouvernement. La Constitution. Édition 2011', Secrétariat général du gouvernement website <http://www.sgg.gov.ma/ Portals/0/constitution/constitution_2011_Fr.pdf> [accessed 19 April 2016].
[126] Paul A. Silverstein, 'The Pitfalls of Transnational Consciousness: Amazigh Activism as a Scalar Dilemma', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 18.5 (2013), 768-778 (p. 774).
[127] Bensadoun, p. 29.

Islamists by proving that the elite was in favour of Standard Arabic.[128] In Morocco, *darija* became widely used in the media in the late 2000s. *Darija* remains a national language that is more used than the official languages and is the language that accomplishes more clearly a cultural unity in both nations, as Berbers have mainly spoken *darija* since the 1970s in both countries. In both countries, the French language, on the other hand, illustrates the 'linguistic compromise': French remains symbolically linked to the colonial power and is also the mark of the political and economic elite's power.[129] French retains its association with the upper classes, who use it more frequently, and is also used in administration, private and state banks, media (newspapers, state and private radio and television channels) and is officially supported by the state in some educational institutions such as universities and technical institutes. *Darija* and French are also incorporated into everyday life, public signage, and artistic and media productions.

Filmmakers, meanwhile, have consistently harnessed linguistic diversity to capture that dimension of cultural diversity, and, arguably, to challenge state authority, monolingualism, and the myths of nation-building. They have, at different periods, either contested the use of Standard Arabic, as in Algeria, or promoted the use of French, *darija*, and Berber languages in films. When Berber was recognised as a national language, films in Berber appeared in Morocco and Algeria, for the first time, though they were mainly distributed locally in DVD format, without subtitles, and remain a niche for Berber speakers. Thus, while these films support local links

[128] Foudil Cheriguen, 'Politiques linguistiques en Algérie', *Mots. Les langages du politique*, 52.1 (1997), 62-73 (p. 63).
[129] Grandguillaume, 'Les Enjeux de la question des langues en Algérie', *Les Cahiers de Confluences. Les Langues de la Méditérannée*, 2002, 141-165 (p. 141).

between minority language and cultural identity, they have not yet been incorporated into the larger culture.

National Cinema: Scholarly Debates

National cinema could be seen as a self-explanatory concept: cinema that emerges from a defined nation. Film scholars, however, have disputed the concept and its presuppositions. What constitutes nationhood? Is nationhood a geographical boundary, or a linguistic unity? Is a national cinema constituted by *all* the films made in a particular country? In an era of globalisation, when funds and film crews are transnational, is the concept of national cinema still valid? This section will review the history of the concept of national cinema by way of academic debates and attempt to answer the questions raised.

From the advent of sound in cinema in the late 1920s to the late 1980s and the emergence of globalisation, national cinema was largely categorised by country of origin, and national cinemas were tied implicitly to the nation's first language: French cinema was in French, German cinema in German, Italian cinema in Italian, etc. To take the example of France, as it is closely tied to the Algerian and Moroccan cases, the vast literature on French cinema as a national cinema has covered almost uniquely films in the French language – from wide-ranging surveys (Sadoul 1962; Armes 1985; Williams 1992; Billard 1995; Frodon 1995; Hayward & Vincendeau 2000; Hayward 2005 among others) to sociological readings (Reader 1981; Buss 1988; Ross 1995; Gaston-Mathé 1996) or gender readings (Tarr with Rollet 2001; Sellier 2008; Rees-Roberts 2008).[130] The same goes for studies of specific periods,

[130] Georges, Sadoul, *Le Cinéma français*, *1890–1962* (Paris: Flammarion, 1962). Armes, *French Cinema* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1985). Alan Williams, *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). Pierre

which are too numerous to be detailed here – including works on silent cinema, the 1930s, the war years, the New Wave, the May 1968 period and up to the contemporary era. Similarly, work on films made by filmmakers of European origins (e.g. Phillips 2004) and those of Maghrebi origins (Tarr 2005; Higbee 2014) concentrate on films in the French language.[131] Even studies that advertise themselves as about the cinema that is popular with French audiences, that is including Hollywood and other national cinemas, end up discussing films in French (Jeancolas 1979; Waldron and Vanderschelden 2007).[132] Among the few exceptions are Vanessa Schwartz's study of cosmopolitan filmmaking in her book *It's So French! Hollywood, Paris, and the Making of Cosmopolitan Film Culture* (2007) and works dedicated to French cinephilia, as scholars examine the object of French film critical practice, that is often Hollywood cinema (de Baecque 2003; Montebello 2005) or British film (Wimmer 2009).[133]

Billard, *L'Âge classique du cinéma français: du cinéma parlant à la nouvelle vague* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995). Jean-Michel Frodon, *L'Âge moderne du cinéma français: de la nouvelle vague à nos jours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995). Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau, eds., *French Film: Texts and Contexts*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2000). Hayward, *French National Cinema*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2005). Keith Reader, *Cultures on Celluloid* (London: Quartet, 1981). Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1995). Catherine Gaston-Mathé, *La Société française au miroir de son cinéma: de la débâcle à la décolonisation* (Condé- sur-Noireau, France: Arléa-Corlet, 1996). Carrie Tarr and Brigitte Rollet, *Cinema and the Second Sex: Women's Filmmaking in France in the 1980s and 1990s* (New York: Continuum, 2001). Geneviève Sellier, *Masculine Singular: French New Wave Cinema*, trans. by Kristin Ross (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008). Nick Rees-Roberts, *French Queer Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

[131] Alastair Phillips, *City of Darkness, City of Light: Émigré Filmmakers in Paris, 1929–1939* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004). Tarr, *Reframing Difference: Beur and Banlieue Filmmaking in France*. Higbee, *Post-Beur Cinema: North African Émigré and Maghrebi-French Filmmaking in France since 2000*. Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, *Histoire du cinéma français*, 2nd edn (Paris: Armand Colin, 2005). Darren Waldron and Isabelle Vanderschelden, eds, *France at the Flicks: Trends in Contemporary French Popular Cinema* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2007).

[132] Vanessa R. Schwartz, *It's So French! Hollywood, Paris, and the Making of Cosmopolitan Film Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[133] Antoine de Baecque, *La cinéphilie: invention d'un regard, histoire d'une culture, 1944–1968* (Paris: Fayard, 2003). Fabrice Montebello, *Le cinéma en France depuis les années*

The debate over national cinema – its definition and usefulness – began in Anglophone academic discourse with Andrew Higson's seminal article 'The Concept of National Cinema', in *Screen* in 1989.[134] Taking British cinema as his starting point, Higson was the first to argue that cinema categories should *not* be strictly restricted to territories. Higson recognised the difficulty of strictly national definitions of cinema, because cinema is an industrial and cultural practice. Furthermore, the means by which films are distributed, exhibited, and how audiences engage with national or Hollywood films must form part of the definition of national cinema. Higson argued that cultural allegiance to Hollywood was an important part of the British public's taste, and Hollywood films became part of British cinema and, more generally, British culture. For Higson, the reception and circulation of national and foreign films within a given country construct and re-define its national cinema.

Hollywood subsequently remained the focus of debates over national cinema. In 1993, Stephen Crofts approached national cinemas in terms of the strategies that nations developed to engage with Hollywood.[135] Firstly, Crofts observed that certain nations do not depend on Hollywood productions. In India, for example, national productions outsell Hollywood films.[136] Secondly, he considered the nations that imitate Hollywood style and integrate it into more vernacular styles – such is the case in Britain and Canada.[137] Thirdly, Crofts identified nations that clearly opposed Hollywood films, as represented by the Third Cinema manifesto.

1930 (Paris: Armand Colin, 2005). Leila, Wimmer, *Cross-Channel Perspectives: The French Reception of British Cinema* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

[134] Andrew Higson, 'The Concept of National Cinema', *Screen*, 30.4 (1989), 36-47.

[135] Stephen Crofts, 'Reconceptualising National Cinema/s', in *Theorising National Cinema*, ed. by Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 2006), pp. 44-58 (p. 50).

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid., p. 51.

Third Cinema, defined by the Argentinian filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in the 1960s, called for a post-colonial, revolutionary view of filmmaking and distribution, rejecting the 'bourgeois' values of Hollywood, which offer only escapism.[138] Fernando and Getino argued that films should raise political consciousness and represent the masses rather than the individual. Crofts' analysis also extended to the auteur-director cinema, which presented a different model of filmmaking to Hollywood. Crofts argued that the auteur-director is identified with the nation he or she emerged from and is opposed stylistically to Hollywood films.[139] On this basis, European film critics often associate Iranian cinema with auteurs such as Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami.

In a 1996 article, film scholar Martine Danan contends that a 'postnational' cinema has emerged in France in the late 1980s. Danan argues that the aggressive policy advocated by the French Ministry of Culture in the late 1980s to promote French cinema abroad and target a global market supported high budget co-productions in English which led to a 'postnational mode of film practice'. [140] Postnational cinema was to capture international audiences and compete with Hollywood with 'commodified postnational productions [*L'Amant* (Dir. Jean Jacques Annaud, 1992), *Indochine* (Dir. Régis Wargnier, 1992), *Valmont* (Dir. Milos Forman, 1989)], transforming the national culture into pleasurable spectacle for domestic and foreign audiences'.[141] With high budget films, French stars and English, postnational cinema would overcome linguistic and cultural barriers

[138] Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, 'Towards a Third Cinema', in *Movies and Methods. An Anthology*, ed. by Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press 1976), pp. 44–64 (p. 44).
[139] Crofts, p. 51.
[140] Martine Danan, 'From a "Prenational" to a "Postnational" French Cinema'', *Film History*, 8.1 (1996), 72–84 (p. 82).
[141] Ibid.

reaching American audiences – reluctant to dubbing and subtitles – by downplaying or eliminating cultural references. [142] By 1993, the Ministry of Culture tightened its funding rules favouring films made in French over those in English, and 'postnational' productions receded.[143]

Postnational cinema exposes French ambition to offset Hollywood's hegemony, while the reinforcement of French language in French productions outlines the desire to maintain a national cinema with cultural specificities. More recently Jonathan Buchsbaum (2017) and Chris Meir (2019) have developed the international/transnational/postnational dimension of French film production investigating how French cinema challenges Hollywood domination and maintains its market share through market regulation, European coproduction and targeted funding policies towards French and foreign directors.[144]

In the late 1990s, the concept of 'transnational' cinema emerged in response to the perceived insufficiencies of national cinema in an era of globalisation. By 2002, for example, Higson had revised his stance on national cinema and was arguing more clearly for transnational cinema. He argued that national cinema cannot capture 'cultural diversity or cultural specificity'.[145] Referring to Benedict Anderson's concept of defining the nation as an 'imagined community' Higson's revised thesis is that the 'nation' is not limited to the borders of the nation-state, and common national characteristics cannot be ascribed to the populations who live within the nation's borders. Higson acknowledges the porosity of geographical

[142] Ibid., p. 77.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Jonathan Buchsbaum, *Exception Taken, How France Has Defied Hollywood's New World Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017). Chris Meir, *Mass Producing European Cinema: Studiocanal and Its Works* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).
[145] Higson, 'The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema', in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. by Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 70-80 (p. 73).

borders, the shifting definition of the nation and the circulation of filmmakers who have always been itinerant, and the internationalisation of production and funding.[146]

Within debates about transnational cinema, national cinema as a sole category had a resurgence. In 2000, Susan Hayward asserted that the concept of national cinema remained useful because films can be understood through and against this term: they can be read in order to recognise the 'symbolic practices' of national discourses; they can also be read as sites of contestation, as 'anti-assimilationist [and] anti-integrationist'.[147] The subsequent 'new' definitions of national cinema argued against the equation of 'national' with the geographical boundaries of the nation-state. In 2006, for example, Jinhee Choi took issue with a 'territorial' approach to national cinema.[148] Because film is an industrial product, resulting from international funding and co-production, the production company is more likely to determine the film's nationality. When co-productions operate across nations, the film's nationality becomes difficult to identify. However, Choi did not discuss the importance of language in defining national cinema in the territorial approach, and thus did not recognise the persistent socio-cultural and political significance of the underlying links between nationhood, nation and language.

In 2011, JungBong Choi critically examined how English-speaking film scholars characterised national cinema. He asserted that over the past decades, film scholars assumed that national cinema was associated with 'identity/uniqueness'.[149] JungBong Choi maintained that film scholars understood national cinema's *raison*

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[146] Higson, 'The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema', p. 80.
[147] Hayward, 'Framing National Cinemas', in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. by Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 88-102 (p. 101).
[148] Jinhee Choi, 'National Cinema, the Very Idea', in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology*, ed. by Noel Carroll and Jinhee Choi (Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2006), pp. 310-319 (p. 310).
[149] JungBong Choi, 'National Cinema: An Anachronistic Delirium?', *The Journal of Korean Studies*, 16.2 (2011), pp. 173-191 (p. 177).

d'être as carrying an exclusive and distinct identity, closely tied to a particular nation.[150] JungBong Choi argued that to regard national cinema as a unique representation of difference is to limit its possibilities: national cinema is not concerned only with identity. JungBong Choi emphasised that Hollywood style has an influence on national filmmaking, but this does not prevent national cinemas from retaining individual characteristics: the notion of 'pure' national cinema is outmoded and should be dismissed.[151]

Film scholars' habitual assumptions about the uniqueness of national cinemas, in JungBong Choi's view, also shed a negative light on nationalism. For JungBong Choi, film scholars sought to redefine national cinema by redefining the 'nation'.[152] JungBong Choi explains that the negative views of nationalism followed the Second World War and led Anglophone film scholars to distance themselves from it. Nationalism came to be considered by many film scholars as a 'source of evil' since it was the ideology behind colonial rule, WWII, and even more recent ethnic conflicts.[153] JungBong Choi, on the other hand, proposed a positive view of nationalism: one that contributes to nation-building, as was the case for newly independent countries. Nation-building is for JungBong Choi the sense of unifying disparate peoples and potentially healing conflict.[154]

But the question must then be asked: can nationalism only be a positive concept for newly independent (or not yet independent) countries? It must also be acknowledged that nationalism has different meanings across different geographies because not all nations are on the same 'historical clock'.[155] Certainly, the concept of

[150] JungBong Choi, p. 180.
[151] Ibid., p. 179.
[152] Ibid., p. 176.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.
[155] JungBong Choi, p. 176.

nationalism has different meanings in Algeria and Morocco, and what becomes of nationalism linked to language is a question that JungBong Choi does not answer in his analysis.

In 2010, Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, in their introduction to an issue of the journal *Transnational Cinemas*, argued that the prolific use of the term 'transnational' has rendered it void of meaning.[156] Higbee and Lim called for a 'critical transnationalism' that would encourage English-speaking academics to be wary when analysing complex and diverse transnational films.[157] For Higbee and Lim, the following elements needed to be taken into account when discussing transnational films: issues of migration, diaspora, and the political, economic, and ideological differences between nations.[158] Higbee and Lim correctly draw attention to the geographical and ideological position from which academics speak, and insist that academics' focus on means of production and distribution can lead them to overlook linguistic and national complexities – such as the language in which the films' characters speak, or the representation of specific political events – in transnational films.[159] Higbee and Lim's observations are accurate in the case of Algerian and Moroccan films: film scholars often overlook their linguistic complexities. This is illustrated in relation to *Goodbye Morocco*, discussed later, a truly transnational film made in Morocco by an Algerian-French filmmaker, whose national characteristics are not immediately apparent and were missed or misrepresented by some critics due to a lack of attention to language.

[156] Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, 'Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies', *Transnational Cinemas*, 1.1 (2010), 7-20 (p. 18).
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.

Scholarly approaches to the problem of national cinema have moved away from the unquestioned link between cinema, language, and the nation – whereby national cinema is bound to national languages and borders – towards diverse and multiple definitions. Globalisation raised questions about nation and nationhood, and the debate has expanded to questions around means of production, distribution and reception, as well as transnational, regional, postnational or even supra-national cinema. While national cinema is defined in relation to the nation, one of the constituent elements of a 'national' cinema, language, is too often set aside – that is, too often absorbed into the characteristics of the 'national' – even though language can be a site of contesting the 'national'.[160]

Having indicated the debates around national cinema and language, I will now turn to the more specific historical features of Algerian and Moroccan cinemas.

History of Algerian and Moroccan Cinemas

Cinema Under Colonial Rule (1895-1956/1962)

Between 1900 and 1956, over fifty years of French colonial rule in North Africa, a total of 210 films were shot in the Maghreb: 80 in Algeria, 20 in Tunisia, and over 100 in Morocco.[161] While this is a small percentage of the total number of French films made during the colonial period, among the North African films were various commercial successes. These films gained interest from scholars in the 1970s;

[160] Vincendeau, 'The Frenchness of French cinema: The Language of National Identity, From the Regional to the Trans-National', in *Studies in French Cinema: UK Perspectives 1985–2010*, ed. by Will Higbee and Sarah Leahy (Bristol: Intellect, 2010), pp. 337–352 (p. 352).
[161] Pierre Boulanger, Le Cinéma colonial de "L'Atlantide" à "Lawrence d'Arabie" (Paris: Seghers, 1975), p. 15.

beforehand they were generally included under a director's filmography or classified by chronological order without the colonial aspect being discussed. French film scholar Pierre Boulanger first sketched out the history of colonial cinema in an anthology published in 1975.[162] In 1991, French scholar Pierre Sorlin continued Boulanger's work and examined the films made during the colonial era.[163] Unlike Boulanger, Sorlin found it problematic to define the cinema of the colonial period as *cinéma colonial*. Sorlin argued that not all French films made in the colonies bear a colonial ideology.[164] Prior to Sorlin's book, Algerian scholars agreed that the cinema of this period should be thought of as *cinéma colonial* and not *cinema made in the colonies.* The Algerian political researcher Lotfi Maherzi, in his exhaustive 1980 book-length survey of Algerian cinema, exposed how French films made in Algeria emerged from colonial policies, particularly as propaganda and as a demonstration of French modernity and progress.[165] For Algerian sociologist Abdelghani Megherbi, who examined colonial films made in Algeria, this cinema is undeniably colonial.[166] Megherbi argued that colonial cinema perpetuated colonial views when films represented the natives as cruel savages who needed to be educated and controlled.[167]

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[162] Ibid.
[163] Pierre Sorlin, 'The Fanciful Empire: French Feature Films and the Colonies in the 1930s', *French Cultural Studies,* 2.5 (1991), 135-151 (p. 135). Earlier, Sorlin co-wrote and co-edited a book about French cinema in the 1930s which includes a chapter on colonial cinema: Geneviève Nesterenko, 'L'Afrique de l'autre', in Michèle Lagny, Marie-Claire Ropars, Pierre Sorlin and Geneviève Nesterenko, *Générique des Années 30* (Vincennes: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes,1986), pp. 127-176.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Lotfi Maherzi*, Le Cinéma algérien: institutions, imaginaire, idéologie* (Alger: Société Nationale d'Édition et de Diffusion, 1980), p. 10.
[166] Abdelghani Megherbi*, Les Algériens au miroir du cinéma colonial: contribution à une sociologie de la décolonisation* (Alger: Société Nationale d'Édition et de Diffusion, 1982), p. 1.
[167] Ibid.

Sorlin's view was also contradicted by Abdelkader Benali, a French film scholar of Maghrebi origins. In 1998, Benali produced a comprehensive study of colonial cinema which considered all the films made in the colonies irrespective of the directors who shot the films. Benali defined the cinema of the period as colonial and traces its origins in the Maghreb back to French Orientalist painting of the 19th century. For Benali, colonial cinema took the themes developed and institutionalised by these paintings – the *harem*, the violence of the indigenous man, his religious fervour, his cultural decadence – and constructed an imaginary world.[168] Benali pointed out that these films were adapted from novels and therefore the impression they gave of the colonial experience was already imprinted on the public consciousness.[169] Benali considered colonial cinema as a medium used to achieve and promote a common representation of colonial space. Benali's work demonstrates that colonial cinema derives from and reinforces pre-existing stereotypes and confirms Edward Said's view that the West depicted the Orient as an 'irrational, psychologically weak, and feminized, non-European Other'.[170]

In 2001 the American historian David Henry Slavin contributed to the debate by comparing and examining the practical conditions of filmmaking in Algeria and Morocco.[171] Although Algeria and Morocco were both under French colonial rule, the different forms of colonial governance and the countries' different histories gave rise to differences in their filmmaking. French films made in Algeria sought popular support from the Empire, were promoted by a 'colonial lobby', and were aided by

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[168] Abdelkader Benali, *Le Cinéma colonial au Maghreb: l'imaginaire en trompe-l'œil* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1998), p. 31.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London, New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 65.
[171] David Henry Slavin, *Colonial Cinema and Imperial France, 1919-1939: White Blind Spots, Male Fantasies, Settler Myths* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 139.

the Foreign Legion in western Algeria who provided means of transport and material aid to filming locations.[172]

French films made in Morocco followed the assimilationist policies of Maréchal Lyautey – Resident General of Morocco (1912 to 1925) – and offered fairer depictions and employment of Moroccans than in Algeria. Lyautey believed that France should keep Morocco's king in power, to preserve Morocco's traditional society, and to promote collaboration between the natives, local administration, and the army.[173] Under Lyautey's reign and influence, a film industry prospered in Morocco. Fiction films, ethnological documentaries, and travel accounts were produced.

While Lyautey's reign was a less authoritarian colonial practice, he nonetheless adopted the 'Berber myth' also deployed in Algeria which dominated during the colonial era.[174] As mentioned earlier, the 'Berber myth' was constructed to create or exacerbate a division between Arabs and Berbers in Morocco and Algeria, pushing the idea Berbers were closer to Europeans than the Arabs, and were ripe for the French *mission civilisatrice*.[175] The Berber myth is evident in some of the French films made in Morocco and Slavin provides the example of *Itto* (Dir. Jean Benoit-Levy, Marie Epstein, 1934), a film that Lyautey helped to produce. For Slavin, *Itto* encouraged audiences to identify with the supposedly European-like Berbers, presented as potential allies of the French colonial enterprise.[176]

Adapted from the novel *Itto, récit marocain d'amour et de bataille* (1923), *Itto* was written by Maurice Le Glay, one of Lyautey's advisers. The plot revolves

[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid., p. 24.
[174] Ibid, p. 125.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.

around the young woman Itto, daughter of Hamou, a Berber tribe leader fighting the French. Hamou forges an alliance with Hamid, another tribe chief whose son Miloud is in love with Itto. However, Hamid's allegiances shift to the French army after a French doctor cures his cattle; Itto and Miloud's love affair is consequently opposed by Hamou, and Miloud is shot by Hamou's men when Itto and Miloud try to elope. Later, Itto gives birth to a daughter, while Miloud is nursed and saved by the French doctor, who cured Hamou's cattle, leading Miloud to pledge allegiance to the French. Ultimately, Itto returns to her father, standing beside him against the French and they both die protecting the fortress. Through the figures of Hamid and Miloud *Itto* appears to celebrate Lyautey's integrationist policies and those Berbers who work alongside the French 'pacifiers'.

Although Lyautey may have promoted protectorate policies and protected indigenous rights, films produced in Morocco still served a political agenda and rarely depicted the lives of the indigenous peoples, just like the films from colonised Algeria. There was also an issue of inauthentic representation – when the 'natives' were represented in these films, they were mostly played by French actors, and appeared subordinate and grateful to have been 'civilised'. The language spoken by these 'natives' was an invented one, vaguely sounding like Berber or Arabic; and sometimes they spoke French.[177] The absence of local dialects or Arabic in these films demonstrates how the filmmakers paid little attention to the existence of the natives, who occupied only secondary roles.

The indigenous population in Algeria and Morocco scarcely had the opportunity to view French films, nor did they understand them. The indigenous Algerian and Moroccan population was thus doubly excluded from the cinema of the

[177] Ibid.

nation they lived in. Indigenous populations were allowed to attend Egyptian films, which began to arrive in 1932, under strict control by the French colonial power. Educational French films were also brought to Algeria and travelled in *cinébuses* to remote areas to reach out to the indigenous rural community.[178] These *cinébuses* were controlled by the French governing body *Le Gouvernorat Général* and they supplied films about folkloric and ethnographic events. Since the local population mainly did not speak French, a translator travelled with the buses and dubbed the films with a voice-over in local dialects.[179] The translator was under the strict surveillance of a French supervisor, which suggests that the French authorities were conscious of the importance of language choice and translation and sought to control the messages delivered.

Egyptian films were successful with local populations in Algeria and Morocco. These films were mainly comedies or dramas, often with appearances from popular Egyptian or Lebanese singers. They were tolerated because they were light-hearted comedies that did not criticise the Egyptian monarchy or foreigners. The *ulemas* encouraged Muslim Algerians to attend Egyptian film screenings.[180] Even if the Arabic spoken in the Egyptian movies was not understood by all audiences, the *ulemas* saw Egyptian cinema in line with their vision of an Arab Algeria. [181] Another surprising fact is that Egyptian films of the period depicted, for example, cabaret dances, not compliant with the *ulemas*' strict views on mores; this suggests that when faced with a choice between different values, the importance of language, both practical and ideological, was paramount. The *ulemas* saw in these

[178] Sébastien Denis, 'Les "cinébus" dans la tourmente. Projections cinématographiques et montée de l'anticolonialisme en milieu rural algérien (1945-1962)', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditérannée*, 130 (2012), 201-214 (pp. 202-203).
[179] Ibid.
[180] Maherzi *Le Cinéma algérien: institutions, imaginaire, idéologie*, p. 46.
[181] Ibid.

films the opportunity to familiarise audiences with the Arabic language, which was otherwise not widely taught. [182] This indicates the *ulemas*' preference for linguistic unity over cultural unity when it came to consolidating nationhood at this point. Egyptian films, however, were only available in urban areas and did not reach Berber speakers. Because the colonial powers were scared that such films might disseminate nationalist ideologies – Egypt was the centre of Arab nationalism – French filmmakers were encouraged to produce films in Morocco at the *Studio Souissi* in Rabat. These films were inspired by myths and legends and occluded the realities of colonisation. Scriptwriters and technicians were all foreigners; and the films encountered little success with the Muslim public.[183]

The French film critic Guy Hennebelle explains that the French failure to produce 'Arab' cinema related to an inability to reproduce two popular forms of cinema: Egyptian melodrama, which offered an important opportunity for catharsis for the indigenous population; and social realist dramas, which reflected the realities of their lives.[184] The Moroccan film critic Mustapha Mesnaoui, meanwhile, notes that French films, produced with Moroccan actors, tended to reproduce Orientalist ideas in the same vein as the tale of *One Thousand and One Nights*.[185] When they failed to capture popular interest, the French authorities simply increased the custom fees for Egyptian films in Algeria and Morocco, to reduce the number of Egyptian films that were distributed. [186]

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[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Guy Hennebelle, 'Cinema *djidid*', in *Algerian Cinema*, ed. by Hala Slamane (London: BFI, 1976), pp. 30-36 (p. 30).
[185] Mustapha Mesnaoui, *Abhath Fil Cinema Al Maghribiya* (Rabat: Manshourat Azzaman, 2001), p. 15.
[186] Maherzi, *Le Cinéma algérien: institutions, imaginaire, idéologie*, p. 47.

The Algerian war and cinema

Cinema became a site of profound struggle for national identity – both as an art form and as a physical space for disseminating ideas. With the outbreak of the war in 1954, Algerians realised the importance of images to publicise their cause abroad. The main political body fighting against the French army, the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN), prohibited the local population from attending cinemas. The FLN considered that French newsreels and films broadcast in cinemas not only embodied the colonial presence but also presented negative images of the fighters as terrorists.[187] In 1957, the *Farid* group, constituted of Algerian and French filmmakers who joined the FLN, began to produce films and documentaries to promote the cause of liberation abroad and counteract French propaganda. Some, such as *Djazairouna* (*Notre Algérie,* Dir. Pierre Chaulet, Djamel Chanderli and Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina,1959) and *Yasmina* (Dir. Djamel Chanderli and Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina, 1961) were broadcast at the United Nations assembly when the Algerian question was discussed, and the films had an impact, albeit limited, in publicising the Algerian cause. These collectively made films were in French, which may seem ironic, but the use of French was logical since the leaders of independence were mainly educated in that language; and French provided a means to engage with international audiences in the West. A linguistic compromise was reached at the time: using French to defend independence.

[187] Denis, 'Les "cinébus" dans la tourmente. Projections cinématographiques et montée de l'anticolonialisme en milieu rural algérien (1945-1962)', p. 210.

Immediate Post-Independence Period (1956/1962-1980s)

The aftermath of French colonial rule saw Algeria and Morocco attempt to rebuild themselves economically, politically, and culturally. The newly independent countries needed to present an image of their rebirth. In Algerian cinema, this effort eclipsed most other social and political questions. National cinema needed to unify the nation around the myth of the Algerian war and build a shared memory of its glory. After independence, more than 450 cinemas remained in Algeria and 200 in Morocco, continuing the French infrastructure, with institutions like the *Centre du Cinéma Marocain* (CCM) founded in 1944 and modelled on the French *Centre National du Cinéma* (CNC).[188]

Another legacy was the practice of sending films back to France for post-production. In the 1960s the nationalised Algerian film industry still sent 35mm films and newsreels to France for developing. This practice was not considered controversial, and it only ended when the increased cost could no longer be justified.[189] Algeria was dependent on France due to a lack of skills, and even though filmmakers were critical of the colonial presence, many were sent to France for training. In this respect, there was an uneasy dependency between the two countries. France was both the source and antithesis of Algeria's independent identity forming in film. Moroccan cinema, meanwhile, maintained the employment of French crews, and remained under supervision by the Ministry of the Interior even until the mid-1990s, with strict control and censorship.

[188] Maherzi, *Le Cinéma algérien: institutions, imaginaire, idéologie*, p. 11. Anne Marie Iddins, 'Producing Public Intellectuals: Shifting Scales and Social Critique in Moroccan Cinema', *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 10.3 (2017), 499-517
[189] Maherzi, *Le Cinéma algérien: institutions, imaginaire, idéologie*, p. 154.

Algerian Cinema 1962-1980: Glorious Days

In Algeria, cinema from the period from 1962 to 1972 was known to critics as *mujahid* cinema: freedom fighter cinema, with many films documenting the heroic efforts during the war against the French. Maherzi offers two types of hero from Algerian films of this period: the *mujahid,* noble, virtuous, proud, and intellectual; and the *fellah,* the peasant.[190] Both of these heroes projected positive images of men. Women rarely appeared on screen, and when they did it was typically as victims of the oppressor rather than heroines of the war.[191] Algerian filmmakers accepted the ideology behind the Arab-socialist rebuilding of the country. Algerian filmmakers, and the crew (actors, technicians), were employees of the state and had to follow the ideological directive to use Standard Arabic in films, which in these early days of Arabisation, few Algerians understood or mastered. Algerian cinema in this period was not popular, as reflected by ticket sales. As Maherzi observes, of the 30 million cinema tickets sold in 1968, only three percent were for Algerian films, which were poorly attended.[192] Algerians were more drawn to French, Hollywood, and Egyptian films.[193]

The Algerian authorities continued to use cinema as propaganda after President Houari Boumediène gained power in the coup of 1965 overthrowing President Ahmed Ben Bella. The 1960s and the 1970s saw spectacular festivals that brought Algeria widespread recognition and influence in international cinema. At

[190] Maherzi, *Le Cinéma algérien: institutions, imaginaire, idéologie*, p. 29.
[191] Ferid Boughedir, 'Cinémas du Maghreb', *CinémAction*, 14 (1981), 125-134 (p. 128), and for further anlysis on the absence of *mujahidat* from the public space after independence see Natalya Vince, 'Colonial and Post-Colonial Identities: Women Veterans of the "Battle of Algiers"', *French History and Civilization*, 2 (2009), 153-168. Danièle Djamila Amrane Minn, 'Women at War: The Representation of Women in *The Battle of Algiers*', *Interventions*, 9.3 (2007), 340–349.
[192] Maherzi, *Le Cinéma algérien: institutions, imaginaire, idéologie*, p. 120.
[193] Ibid.

this time, many co-productions were initiated, involving directors from Egypt (Youssef Chahine), France, and Italy. Costa Gavras's *Z* (1969) was one of the most well-known Algerian-French co-productions of the era. The diversity of languages did not disturb Algerian film critics, as these films were co-productions and did not bear an Algerian label. These films were distributed in Algerian cinemas and at the Algerian Cinémathèque – an institution that played an important role in promoting international films.

After a decade of *mujahid* films, according to Hennebelle, a new era in Algerian cinema began: *cinéma djidid*, or *new* cinema, films made in *darija* and Standard Arabic.[194] Hennebelle places the beginning of this period in 1972, immediately after the agrarian revolution, which aimed at the nationalisation of agricultural lands and the end of feudal exploitation. *Cinéma djidid* was named in relation to Brazil's *cinema novo,* which emerged in 1959 and rejected the Hollywood commercial style in favour of social realism, proletarian struggle and political edification. *Cinéma djidid* sought much the same. Hennebelle described this cinema as an attempt to 'pave the way for an authentic Algerian cinema language' and ultimately to 'defeat […] cultural colonialism'.[195] It is interesting that Hennebelle makes use of 'cinema language' rather than discussing language in itself; he stresses the conception of cinema as an ideological tool, in the same vein as Third Cinema, viewing language only as a component but not an essential one since the main aim was to awaken the public and find a new Algerian cinema that would break with the *mujahid* era and the remains of colonialism in culture.

Le Charbonnier (Dir. Mohammed Bouamari, 1972) is an example of *cinéma*

[194] Hennebelle, 'Cinema *djidid*', p. 30.
[195] Ibid., p. 31.

djidid which narrates the difficulty for a former combatant, Gacem, of fitting in with independent Algerian society upon his return from the war. Gacem witnesses gender changes: his wife was hired in a nearby factory and his position as the breadwinner is shaken. Gacem's coal business is threatened by the appearance of gas. When Gacem seeks aid from a former combatant, in town, to find work, he finds his friend changed into a bourgeois bureaucrat. Towards the end of the film, Gacem accepts the political and social changes Algeria is witnessing. He participates in the agrarian reform initiated by the political authorities and encourages his wife to take off her veil as a sign of modernity. Shot in black and white, with traditional Algerian music that enhances the dark mood of the film, the film is quasi-silent. Television voice-overs are in Standard Arabic. Gacem's friend, the bureaucrat, speaks *darija* when ordering coffee but uses Standard Arabic to remember heroic actions, or to describe the future of Algeria in ideological terms. The film denounces class struggle and attacks the feudalists and bureaucrats as neo-colonialists. Even if the film uses *darija*, Standard Arabic remains the main language spoken and heard, apparently so as to keep the ideology of a united language that carries Algerian ideologies.

By 1976, Algerian national cinema was used to reinforce Algerian national identity and promote 'Algérianisation', the political project started by the President Ben Bella, Algeria's first President, that sought to replace foreign employees with Algerians. Algérianisation went hand in hand with Arabisation and aimed at educating the Algerian people about the Algerian nation and its history, promoting the politics of the Algerian government and providing a sense of belonging to

Algerians.[196] The government's strategy, announced in 1976, was to produce ten films and twenty short films annually by 1980 to reinforce 'Algérianisation'.[197]

The Algerian thinker and politician Mostefa Lacheraf tried to provide a new definition of Algerian national identity or what was called 'Algérianité', and to oppose the political ideology that inscribed the Algerian identity and tied it uniquely to the 'Arab Muslim' identity.[198] Lacheraf believed that culture was the hostage of nationalism, at the expense of progress, which he saw to be reflected in films of the period. Lacheraf, who was the Minister of Education (1977-1979) denounced the replacement of Algerian dialects with Standard Arabic in the media and called for bilingualism (Arabic and French) in education. He had to resign from his position as the FLN was opposed to his educational programme.

Cinéma djidid's ideologically-driven filmmakers were influenced, Hennebelle claims, by Lacheraf.[199] However, these films encountered little success. The *djidid* films were mainly social dramas that insisted on the difficult conditions of the rural population. Algerian journalists considered the films produced as too close to the official political doctrine and noted that they did not appeal to the Algerian public, who were more attracted to American, Indian, and Egyptian films. Sabry Hafez has also argued that the colonial presence and legacy influenced the films made post-independence and imprinted upon the 'national psyche'.[200] According to Hafez, the trauma of French colonialism, and the desire to sever the

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[196] Fawzi Abdulrazak, 'Arabization in Algeria', *MELA*, 26 (1982), 22-43 (p. 29).
[197] François Chevaldonné, Zoubida Haddab and Jean-Robert Henry, 'Sur le cinéma algérien en 1976', *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* < http://aan.mmsh.univ-aix.fr/Pdf/AAN-1976-15_23.pdf> [accessed 20 March 2014].
[198] Sofiane Hadjadj, 'Les impasses de l'action culturelle en Algérie', *La pensée de midi*, 3 (2005), 59-64 (p. 60).
[199] Hennebelle, 'Cinema *djidid*', p. 30.
[200] Sabry Hafez, 'The Quest For/Obsession with the National in Arabic Cinema', in *Theorising National Cinema*, ed. by Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 2006), pp. 226-253 (p. 244).

ties with France through cinema, embedded itself into post-independence films: the films' main theme was the reconstruction of a national image, by which Arabic became the instrument of promoting the political ideology of the newly independent country.[201]

The question of language in films was not evoked in books written in French of the time as it seems that after independence film critics and filmmakers were more concerned with establishing the foundations of a national cinema. It was not until the 1970s that film critics, and filmmakers, started to reject Standard Arabic as the sole language of cinema and cultural production and sought alternatives such as *darija*. The Arabic-language newspaper *El Djeich* argued in 1980 that Algerian cinema lacked popular support because it leant too heavily on propaganda and failed to represent the people in a realistic way.[202] *El Djeich* does not mention the failure of Standard Arabic to be understood by audiences and does not link it to the failure of Algerian films of the time, probably because it is a journal written in Standard Arabic.

Commercial and critical successes in Algeria tended towards realism rather than politics, and the remarkable success of the 1970s is the first feature by Algerian director Merzak Allouache: *Omar Gatlato*, released in 1977. Allouache is one of the most prolific and internationally known Algerian directors, and *Omar Gatlato* initiated his career. The film circulated in international festivals (Moscow, Cannes, Karlovy Vary). In Algeria, the film drew half a million viewers. People queued to view it, an unprecedented event for an Algerian feature. Rumours that the Algerian

[201] Ibid.
[202] Mouny Berrah, 'Le cinéma algérien en 1977', *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 16 (1979), 919-926 (p. 964).

minister of communication was going to withdraw the film led some youth to destroy seats in cinemas as a sign of protest.[203]

Figure 2. *Omar Gatlato*'s original poster in French, 1977[204]

The success relates to the film's principal theme that differs from the *mujahid* era and deals directly with daily social issues. The film follows the daily life of Omar, a young adult, who directly addresses the camera and audience. Omar lives in Bab El Oued, a working-class neighbourhood in Algiers, in a crowded apartment with his family, and works in the government's fraud department. Mouny Berrah argues that the film's success was mainly due to its subversive use of *darija* and *chaâbi* (a popularised version of Andalusian music).[205] Through *Omar Gatlato* Allouache broke with the filmic norm to present *chaâbi* as similar to *darija*; both had

[203] Ibid.
[204] A poster in Arabic was also available at the time of the film's release.
[205] Berrah, 'Algerian Cinema and National Identity', in *Screens of Life: Critical Film Writing from the Arab World*, ed. by Alia Arasoughly (St-Hyacinthe, Quebec: World Heritage Press, 1996), pp. 63-83 (p. 65).

no part in the official cultural policy.[206] The film addresses the difficulties of young men finding their place in independent Algeria, maintaining relationships with women, and existing independently of their family or friends.

The 1970s also saw a rise in film criticism. Many Algerian critics had been educated in France in human sciences and sociology (e.g., Megherbi, Maherzi), and many wrote in French (e.g., Mouny Berrah, Abdou Benzaine). In the 1970s and 1980s political film criticism appeared in 'leftist' French-language newspapers such as *Révolution africaine* and *Algérie actualités,* in film periodicals such as *Les Deux Écrans*, and in official journals such as *El Moudjahid* in French and *El Djaich* in Arabic. Overall, very little of this writing was in Arabic. Like the FLN leaders mentioned earlier, many post-independence scholars had attended schools where Arabic was taught only as a foreign language (from the late 1940s), or in Muslim religious schools where only religious verses were taught and the teaching methods did not allow a complete grasp of the language.

Moroccan Cinema 1956-1980: Shy Beginnings

Morocco's film industry differed from that of Algeria, in terms of structure, use of language, and criticism. Moroccan film criticism and history was mostly conducted by English and American French-speaking scholars. *The American Institute of Maghrebi Studies* (AIMS) and the Fulbright Scholarship Program provided American scholars with the means to conduct research (American scholars Sandra Carter Gayle and Valérie K. Orlando benefitted from AIMS and the Fulbright Scholarship for their research on Moroccan cinema). AIMS, established in 1984 in Oran (Algeria), is the publisher of the well-known *Journal of North African Studies*

[206] Ibid.

and organises joint events with North African and international researchers of the region, gaining recognition and investing in a region that had usually been the preserve of French researchers (even if Moroccan (and Algerian) cinema were hardly the focus of most French researchers). The scarcity of film studies departments in France may partially explain the neglect of Moroccan cinema, as may the fact that Moroccan cinema is often still seen as part of Maghrebi cinema and not as an independent entity (as in Denise Brahimi's *50 ans de cinéma maghrébin*, which discusses films from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia and provides the films' plot, information on the directors' trajectory, and some personal views of the films). In Morocco, film studies departments do not exist in universities, hence cinema criticism, history and analysis were undertaken by journalists (writing in French and in Arabic).

Amongst the books published on Moroccan cinema, Roy Armes's *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North African Film* (2005) provides a useful supplementary insight into the functioning of cinema structures in Morocco, and a chronological filmography, but it is mainly descriptive and does not offer an in-depth analysis of the films produced since independence.[207] American scholar Sandra Gayle Carter offered the most exhaustive review of Moroccan cinema, in her 2006 book, in which she traced the history of cinema from independence in 1956 until 2006, and drew on the archives of the CCM, interviews, and early films.[208]

Carter's book title *What Moroccan Cinema?* reflects a question she has been asked by Moroccans, who doubt that they even have a national cinema. Carter's answer to this question highlights the importance of cinema to the building of the

[207] Armes, *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North African Film*.
[208] Sandra Gayle Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema?: A Historical and Critical Study, 1956-2006* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009).

Moroccan nation-state after independence. Moroccan cinema, she argues, constructed national identity in the post-independence era, albeit through privileging Islamic and Arabic identity at the expense of Berber and multilingual identities.[209] Carter also explains that religion and wars were absent from the films made in the 1970s: to address religion would either alienate or incite Muslim activists, and war films would 'remind the populace of one option of national determination'.[210] Short Moroccan features and documentaries toured in the rural areas to 'educate' the population about Morocco's political ambitions to modernise.[211] These screenings also contained public health advice. Post-independence Moroccan cinema was therefore not aimed at representing everyday life but trying to modernise and inform the population.

Ciné clubs were an important means of distribution in Morocco in this period and gathered film aficionados, mainly in cities, and were usually presided over and attended by French citizens. These clubs did not, however, disseminate the few Moroccan films that were released, either because these films were not available or because they were not deemed worthy of interest.[212] The ten films made in Morocco during the 1970s were mainly distributed in film festivals (Cannes, Venice), and were rarely shown in Moroccan cinemas.[213] An example is the award winning *Alyam Alyam* (Dir. Ahmed El Maanouni, 1978), the first Moroccan feature to be presented at Cannes under the selection *Un Certain Regard*. *Alyam Alyam* is a documentary that exposes the harsh conditions of a family living in the countryside not far from

[209] Ibid., p. 552.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid., p. 25.
[213] Ibid.

Casablanca, and the desire of the eldest son to apply for a work permit in France, seeking a better future. The film however was hardly seen or distributed in Morocco.

Despite cinema not being explicitly used for political propaganda, I argue that there was a political agenda to the educational films; it was tightly controlled by the political authorities. Censorship under Hassan II's reign was generally very active, and film did not escape its grasp. Film policies were geared towards Moroccan audiences imagined as either rural and in need of education, or urban and only interested in foreign films. However, documentaries were voiced over either in *darija* or its regional variants. Unlike their Algerian counterparts, Moroccan authorities did not deny the heterogeneity of languages. *Darija*, in this instance, was a means to inform and educate particularly isolated rural audiences.

Whether Moroccan cinema remained underdeveloped as a result of deliberate policy or simple lack of funding, the result was to encourage filmmakers to establish their own production companies. Filmmakers had to seek funding outside of Morocco, which would further 'transnationalise' cinema and further complicate the notion of 'national cinema' if the latter is understood to be compromised by foreign funding and influence.

The Fall and Rise of Algerian Cinema in the Globalisation Era (1980s–Present)

The globalised era begins in Algeria with the death of President Boumediène in 1978. Boumediène had been a proponent of Algeria's socialist politics during the 1960s and 1970s, but after his death, and following the decline of the state-controlled economy, the government adopted more liberal economic policies. Directors were dismissed from the Algerian Cinema Office, the state structure of production was dissolved in 1984, cinemas were privatised, means of funding were

cut, and television's influence grew. In the early 1980s, fewer films were made than in the 1970s, and the few films that were produced did not attract critical or commercial success.

The political and social changes that Algeria witnessed in the late 1980s and 1990s, however, forced cinema to concentrate on political events: youth protests in 1988, the emergence of the Islamic party, and escalating violence. Between 1991 and 1999, when Algeria saw increased violence in the context of civil war, cinemas were bombed or deserted; when the FIS obtained a majority of councils in 1990, they closed cinemas that were not compliant with Islamic values. As it had been during the Algerian war, cinema again became a site of contestation.

This cinema of contestation allowed silenced groups to speak and challenge state narratives through the medium of film. It challenged and sought to provide another perspective on Algeria's history and contemporary situation. For instance, women filmmakers dealt with the rise of Islamism in Algeria, as in Hafsa Koudil's *Le Démon au féminin* (1992) or retraced the history of the *moujahidates* (women fighters during the Algerian war) in Djamila Sahraoui's documentary *La Moitié du ciel d'Allah* (1995). Films in Berber languages were also produced during this period: Azzedine Meddour's *La Montagne de Baya* (1997) and Belkacem Hadjadj's *Machaho* (1995). These films did not tackle contemporary issues but used legends to denounce the contemporary condition of women or rural life. The use of Berber was understood as a political gesture to re-inscribe Berber languages and history in the common Algerian history.

The early 1990s were also marked by the exile of directors, who mainly settled in France. Armes rightly points out that Maghrebi filmmakers are 'inevitably *auteurs*, total authors of their films', arguing that without significant financial means

for production, directors have to 'organize production through their own personal companies, raise national and foreign backing through a script they have personally written, and shoot without the presence of a controlling producer'.[214] In the case of Algeria, the lack of funding enhanced the directors' autonomy as they had to participate in every aspect singlehandedly: the directors had to produce and distribute their films through their own production company and acted as primary spokesman.

Benziane also observes how those directors who were established in France, such as Mehdi Charef and Allouache, could only count on the financial support of the French CNC, or European television networks, rather than Algerian authorities. Between 2000 and 2008, the CNC funded ten Algerian films, while the Algerian Minister of Culture only funded five. This discrepancy is due to the non-existence of national cinema structures in Algeria, and the fact that priority was given to films about the Algerian war. When other films were funded, grants were minor. The continuity of *mujahid* films can be explained in terms of the unchanged ruling political elite, which demonstrates that 'nationalism' had itself become a 'myth' so necessary for the ethos of the governing elite that it constrained film production.

For Benziane, Algerian directors seeking French funding make up an 'indigenous' quota for the French funding bodies; and their films tend to be treated only as political expressions and not artistic achievements.[215] Benziane adds that these directors' films had a poor reception in Algeria because they were not made for an Algerian public as they had European actors and were in French; instead, they were made to circulate in festivals.[216] Benziane blames the Algerian authorities, who

[214] Armes, 'Cinemas of the Maghreb', *Black Camera*, 1.1 (2009), 5-29 (p. 8).
[215] Abdou Benziane, 'Le Cinéma algérien: de l'État tutélaire à l'état de moribond', *La Pensée de midi*, 1 (2001), 84-89 (p. 85).
[216] Ibid.

marginalised Algerian cinema for fear of its subversive potential.[217] Algerian journalist Amira Soltane also refuses to recognise how Algerian films in French can retain an Algerian identity. She observes that such films do not achieve mainstream success in France, do not bring money back to Algerian cinema, and are ignored by the French public.[218] Soltane would prefer a cinema that represents Algerian life without recourse to the typical themes – perhaps clichés – of terrorism, corruption, and unemployment.[219]

Undoubtedly, issues of language and national identity prevail in the debate over Algerian cinema and its role in reconstructing the nation's self-image. I agree with Benziane that the Algerian minister of culture does not fund filmmakers unless they glorify the actions of the past; I disagree, however, that the use of the French language and European actors distance filmmakers from the Algerian public. Moknèche's *Le Harem de Madame Osmane*, for example, discussed in Chapter Four, takes place in Algiers, uses French, and has Carmen Maura, a Spanish star, in its lead role. The film succeeds in portraying the start of the civil war and narrates realities of Algerian life. It was a critical success in Algeria, despite not being widely distributed. Furthermore, French is one the languages spoken in Algeria, blended in the daily life, in the media, and it is noticeable that journalists did not question whether Algerian Francophone literature is only addressed to a French public and distanced from Algerian realities. Clearly there is a relationship between the 'images' of Algerians in films that use French, which I will further explore in the second chapter.

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[217] Ibid.
[218] Amira Soltane, 'Donne-moi l'argent français, je te fais un film algérien', *L'Expression*, 6 December 2008 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/lexpression/123501> [accessed 12 February 2014].
[219] Ibid.

As mentioned earlier many of the Algerian films were made by directors living abroad returning to film in Algeria, and I ask whether these films belong to the category of 'accented cinema'. Discussing films made by exilic, diasporic and ethnic filmmakers living in other countries than their own country of origin, the Iranian film scholar Hamid Naficy introduced the concept of 'accented cinema', a type of cinema closely linked to the identity of those who create them, and are expressed with the 'accent', or subjective perspective, of the filmmaker.[220] For Naficy, accented films share a 'home-seeking' or 'home-founding' nostalgia and are opposed to commercial cinema.[221] Naficy discusses the split reception of accented filmmakers: recognised in international cinemas, but not in their own country of origin. Naficy argues that these accented films exemplify the complex links between language and 'regional and national identities prior to displacement'.[222] Naficy highlights the way in which accented directors cling to their language as part of their identity, possibly limiting the international distribution of the film, and using language as a 'marker of belonging and authenticity'.[223] Indeed, the complex inter-relation between language and national identity is one of the key constituents of 'accented cinema'. The accented filmmaker maintains an 'organic relationship' with their audience through the use of their own language, which retains a vital link with 'home'.[224] Consequently, language remains a signifier of national identity in accented cinema.

Following Naficy, the film scholar Asuman Suner proposes that the concept of accented cinema can be extended to national directors who cannot be regarded as

[220] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 23.
[221] Ibid., p. 123.
[222] Ibid., p. 24.
[223] Ibid., p. 122.
[224] Ibid., p. 34.

'exilic/diasporic' – that is, directors who do not reside in western countries or have any attachment with the 'West'. Suner calls for an 'accented cinema at large'.[225] These filmmakers reside in their home nation, but they resist the official national narratives (which, in Algeria, include the glorification of the war and a homogenous Algerian identity). These films still raise issues of belonging and identity, within a group or a nation, and describe issues of exile; they can also be multilingual, and typically adopt a small scale of production, with limited means. The directors tend to write, edit, and shoot the films. For Suner, 'accented cinema at large' reads differently to transnational films made by either national or exilic directors who deal with questions of belonging and identity, because accented cinema at large questions the nation beyond and across national borders and critically takes into account questions of 'belonging and identity as their central problematic'.[226] Suner argues that 'accented cinema at large' will re-define national cinema through a 'subversive critique of the hegemony of contemporary neo-colonial as well as nationalist discourses'.[227]

I argue that language still plays a key role in accented cinema at large, and that some Algerian filmmakers can be located as part of this cinema. These include Téguia, Moknèche, and Allouache. These filmmakers, in contrast to Naficy's account, do not cling to their national language; instead, the languages that they choose for their Algerian films enhance the 'exilic' feel, displacing the films from the official circuits and bringing marginalised languages to the centre – Berber, French, and, most notably, the sort of youthful slang that is never spoken on national television. Such slang features in Téguia's *Roma ouella n'touma*, discussed in this

[225] Asuman Suner, 'Outside in: 'Accented Cinema' at Large', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 7.3 (2006), 363-382 (p. 384).
[226] Ibid., p. 379.
[227] Ibid.

thesis. Téguia, Moknèche and Allouache are preoccupied with national and global issues, and the role of language in connecting cultural to transnational practices. These filmmakers use multiple languages to mark both the exile and the accent of the filmmakers as well as to mark a political stance.

The study of Algerian history reveals that the idea of 'national cinema' has been tied up with a political project to create a sense of national identity. An inevitable tension has emerged since 1999 between the official notion of national cinema and a notion that documents the true and diverse experiences of a diverse population in a large country. It seems that, ultimately, Algerian national cinema – a cinema that documents the true experience of the place and its people – has no place in the nation itself.

The Revival of Moroccan Cinema: 1980 – the Present

The place of Moroccan films contrasts with the position of Algerian films in Algeria. Not only does Moroccan television fund Moroccan features, it also broadcasts them. After 1999, with the change of monarch, the CCM has seen its budget increase every year, and although its contributions to films are modest, at an average of 50,000 euros per film, it grants funds to an increasing number of features.[228] Film festivals have emerged and promoted national and international productions in Morocco's rural and urban areas; eighteen film festivals are programmed every year ranging from the African film festival, the Maghrebi film festival, to the national film festival in Tangier.[229] While these film festivals may only be accessible to a portion of the population, the Moroccan state-owned television 2M has increased its

[228] Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema?: A Historical and Critical Study, 1956-2006,* p. 187.
[229] 'Festivals et manifestations cinématographiques', CCM website <http://www.ccm.ma/festivals-manifestations-cinematographiques> [accessed 12 November 2018].

coverage of the film festivals and broadcasts some of the films shown at these events.

Carter argues that while many of the films of the 1970s were made in the same vein as Egyptian melodramas or Bollywood musicals and did not encounter success , in the 1980s Moroccan filmmakers adopted a more 'simple and accessible' film style and tackled issues inherent to Moroccan society.[230] Film such as *Un amour à Casablanca* (Dir. Abdelkader Legataa, 1991), *À la recherche du mari de ma femme* (Dir. Mohammed Abderhamane Tazi, 1993) were box office hits appealing to 400,000 viewers, reconciling the Moroccan public with its cinema.[231] In the 1990s, cinema schools opened, and Morocco also trained crews as Morocco hosts foreign shoots in different areas, offering more safety for shooting than much of the Middle East, thus welcoming transnational film production in order to build a 'national' industry more effectively. Some film directors also established their own production company, such as Nabil Ayouch who created Ali N Productions, which finances his films and other Moroccan directors (Hisham Lasris' *C'est eux les chiens* (2013)). Between 1999 and 2015 over 100 Moroccan films were released in Morocco, which indicates the revival of filmmaking; television films were also made by different filmmakers and funded by 2M.[232] Short features were also granted funding by the CCM and 2M and circulated in national film festivals, which allowed for a younger generation of filmmakers to emerge. Moroccan films made since 1999 were also diverse in terms of genre: comedies, drama, thrillers, and attracted the Moroccan

[230] Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema?: A Historical and Critical Study, 1956-2006,* p. 196.
[231] Ibid.
[232] 'Bilan cinématogrpahique de l'année 2016', CCM website <http://www.ccm.ma/inter/bilans/12-bilan.pdf> [accessed 12 November 2017].

public to cinemas, often gathering more public than Hollywood or Bollywood films.[233]

While the films made since 1999 have dealt with social and political concerns, Carter observed that politics are only present in those films, made since 1999, that safely criticised the 'years of lead'.[234] Carter maintains that, unlike Moroccan literature where fantasy is to be found, Moroccan cinema has relied on 'awkward abstraction and intellectualism', in that way imitating French cinema.[235] Furthermore, the government's film censorship concurs with the censorship 'imposed by other cultural taboos, such as an inability to criticise the Moroccan self'.[236] *Casanegra*, *Amours voilées*, *Les Jardins de Samira*, which I will discuss in chapter three and four, contradict Carter's generalisations about the inability of Moroccans to overcome cultural taboos. *Casanegra*, not only deals with the youth despair and desire to emigrate, it also uses crude *darija*, abounding with sexual language and insults and it was one of the most successful Moroccan films upon its release in 2007. *Amours voilées* is another example of overcoming taboos, exhibiting extra marital affairs. These films' success is proof that Moroccan cinema is diverse, and that it investigates social and political issues, though it does not offer solutions.

The question of language is discussed in relation to Moroccan films, but it stirs less heated debates than in Algeria. Post-colonial links between Morocco and France are politically less tense than those between Algeria and France. Furthermore, fewer Moroccan films are funded by the French CNC compared to Algeria. Language is not regarded as such a major determinant of national identity in

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[233] Siham Jadraoui, 'Les Productions marocaines ont toujours la cote', *Ajourd'hui Le Maroc*, 26 March 2018 <http://aujourdhui.ma/culture/cinema/box-office-les-productions-marocaines-ont-toujours-la-cote> [accessed 30 April 2018].
[234] Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema?: A Historical and Critical Study, 1956*-2006, p. 305.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid.

Moroccan films as in Algerian films – although national identity is discussed, the French language does not play a primary role in those discussions, and critics are more likely to focus on the characters' religion than their language. French is used by the educated upper- and middle-class characters (see, for example, *Marock* and *Où vas-tu Moshé?*), but is not used as a site of contestation as in Algerian films.

Conclusion

This chapter was guided by two related questions: what is the relationship between national cinema and the language used on screen, and specifically, how is national identity linked to language in Algerian and Moroccan films of the period under investigation? The literature review questioned whether national cinema is a valid concept, and if so, how it should be defined. Early definitions accounted for the role of language although they did not recognise its importance in defining the 'national'; accounts of accented cinema and Higbee's account of language in transnational cinema provide two useful exceptions. Following the survey above of Algerian and Moroccan cinema, and the relationship between language and national identity therein, how do these cinemas fit within academic debates?

Algerian and Moroccan cinemas have experienced fifty turbulent and diverse years. While Algerian cinema was born during the war of independence to represent that experience, post-independence Algerian cinema emerged from nation-state politics. The films produced after independence were hardly viewed and were commercially unsuccessful. Post-independence Algerian cinema absorbed the first definition of national cinema: a limited territorial cinema that consolidated nation-building, produced and consumed within the national boundaries. However, this cinema failed to successfully convey political ideologies to the population, and one

of the reasons of the failure was the inadequacy of Standard Arabic. The films' use of the official Standard Arabic language failed to connect the audiences to the films. The first period of Algerian cinema corresponds to what Hayward built her theory against: film that speaks 'of/for/as the nation'.[237] Hayward's comments on national cinema here apply directly to the Algerian example, whereby its national cinema arguably should not have sought to construct myths or reinforce an idealised account of the nation but focus instead on everyday issues.

Official Algerian cinema continues to present itself as a spokesperson of the nation, and its linguistic choices are supposed to reflect the nation's identity. Now that the state has weakened its grip on film production, Algerian cinema has been able to enter a new era and investigate how national identity is constructed and contested. Language has become one of the means used by filmmakers to delineate Algerian identity. In this sense, recent Algerian films follow Hayward's view that film can also contest and challenge nationalist discourses (although Hayward does not identify language as a means of doing so).

Algerian cinema also contradicts Higson's view that the reception and circulation of films define national cinema and mould the public's taste. Some Algerian films are not available to Algerian viewers, but this does not make them less constitutive of Algerian cinema as they are still able to hold a mirror to Algerian concerns. Algerian films made in the official circuits also encounter little success at the box office even though they are more likely to be broadcast in cinemas and discussed in the press. With Algeria's many languages each have their own political implications; and a working definition of Algerian cinema as an 'accented cinema at

[237] Hayward, 'Framing National Cinemas', p. 91.

large' conveys more accurately the multifaceted, heterogeneous, and multilingual nature of Algerian cinema, which is often 'other' even to local audiences.

Moroccan cinema on the other hand, was quasi inexistent after independence and was subjected to political power and censorship in the 1970s until late 1990s. Moroccan cinema hence did not comply with JungBong Choi's definition of national cinema allowing independent countries to construct the nation. Only recently has a definition of Moroccan cinema emerged, more in line with Higson's view: Moroccan cinema circulates within the territorial boundaries of Morocco and abroad, is seen by Moroccans and influences their taste.

In relation to language, the American scholar Valérie K. Orlando has surveyed the 'new' Moroccan cinema, films made after 1999, and chosen to use language to mark the different categories within its national cinema.[238] Orlando asks whether there is a dichotomy between, on the one hand, Moroccan film production in *darija* and Berber, only screened in Morocco but still subtitled in French for the elites living in Morocco and Moroccans living abroad, and on the other hand, Francophone films, which seem to appeal more to Moroccan emigrants, Morocco's elite who speak French, and international audiences.[239] Orlando does not answer the question that she poses. She only confirms that no matter which language is chosen, all films deal with the same social and political issues associated with Morocco's cultural climate. The dichotomy that Orlando identifies between Arabophone and Francophone filmmakers was earlier mirrored in debates within postcolonial literature about whether the former colonised should still write in the language of the coloniser.

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[238] Valérie K. Orlando, *Screening Morocco: Contemporary Film in a Changing Society* (Athens, Ohio London: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2011), pp. xiii-xiv.
[239] Ibid.

Carter and Orlando trace a clear dichotomy between French and Standard Arabic: for them, French is the language of modernity, and of the upper classes, and Standard Arabic is the language of Islam and of the Arab nation.[240] I do not agree with these clear-cut affirmations, as Carter and Orlando assume languages to be separate – Arabic, Berber, French – and do not recognise the extent to which languages in Morocco are intertwined. Furthermore, the different ideological associations of each language, as defined by Carter and Orlando, serve to obscure the fact that all these languages are constitutive of national 'identity'. The combination of French with other languages lends support to the view that one nation – and Morocco or Algeria in particular – cannot be equated with one language, just as national cinema, in the case of Algeria and Morocco, cannot be equated with one language but with a multiplicity of languages. Language, as I hope to have shown, has a prominent place in defining national cinema in Algeria and Morocco, from early efforts towards nation-building to transnational, accented cinemas that contest and resist homogenous, monolingual definitions of the nation.

[240] Ibid. Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema?: A Historical and Critical Study, 1956*-2006, pp. 18-21.

Chapter Two: Narrating the Nation. Language, Identity and Belonging

In this section, I will attend to Algerian and Moroccan films of the globalised era that explore an aspect of national identity through attention to language use. These films bring to the forefront religion as linked to Moroccan identity either in the present, as in *Marock* (Dir. Leila Marrakchi, 2005) a predominantly French-language film, or in the past, as in *Où vas-tu Moshé?* (Dir. Hassan Ben Jelloun, 2007), a film that combines *darija* and French. I will also explore *Viva Laldjérie* (Dir. Nadir Moknèche, 2004) and *Goodbye Morocco* (Dir. Moknèche, 2013), shot by the same director and considered as transnational films. *Viva Laldjérie* uses the French language, which attracted criticism for bringing an inauthentic feel to the film and distorting Algerian identity. In contrast, *Goodbye Morocco* uses *darija*, is shot in Morocco, and features a Morocco-centric storyline, but is considered neither a Moroccan nor an Algerian film by Algerian and Moroccan journalists and cultural bodies. *Goodbye Morocco* questions the role of languages in the construction of identity. By exploring these different films, I wish to investigate the constituents of national identity and the role of language in cementing or challenging it.

Viva Laldjérie: Tous les Algériens parlent français ?

What happens when a film labelled as Algerian uses French? To answer this question, I shall focus on *Viva Laldjérie* and analyse the implications of its choice of language. *Viva Laldjérie* was one of the first films to be shot and premiered in

Algiers after the Black Decade. Nadir Moknèche (born in 1965) left Algeria for France when he was 18 and was part of Ariane Mnouchkine's *Théâtre du Soleil*. He later attended the New York School for Social Research where he directed two short features. *Viva Laldjérie* is Moknèche's second film; it is co-funded by France and Belgium and it received *l'avance sur recettes* from the CNC. Moknèche also received funding from the Algerian Ministry of Culture and Communication as part of the 2003 Franco-Algerian cultural event *Djazaïr*, a joint political initiative to promote cultural exchanges and convey a fresh image of Algeria after the Black Decade.[241]

Viva Laldjérie is set in Algiers in 2003. It chronicles the lives of three Algerian women who together live in a pension in central Algiers: Goucem, a young woman of 27 who pursues an affair with a married man, Dr Sassi; her mother, Papicha, a former cabaret dancer; and Fifi, a prostitute. The film directly addresses the sexuality of these women, with depictions of the women's naked bodies, adultery, and prostitution. André Videau refers to the protagonists as 'la Maman, la fille et la putain', echoing Jean Eustache's *La Maman et la Putain* (1973, France).[242] With a trio of protagonists, Eustache's film questions the malaise of Parisians in a post-1968 Paris.

[241] Abdou B., 'Algérie: Djazaïr 2003. Au chapitre cinéma de l'année de l'Algérie en France: des longs et des courts pour un rencontre 2003 inédite', *La Tribune*, 18 December 2003 <https://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200312180207.html> [accessed 10 May 2014].
[242] André Videau, '*Viva Laldjérie*. Film algérien de Nadir Moknèche [compte rendu]', *Hommes et Migrations*, 1249 (2004), 140-141 (p. 140).

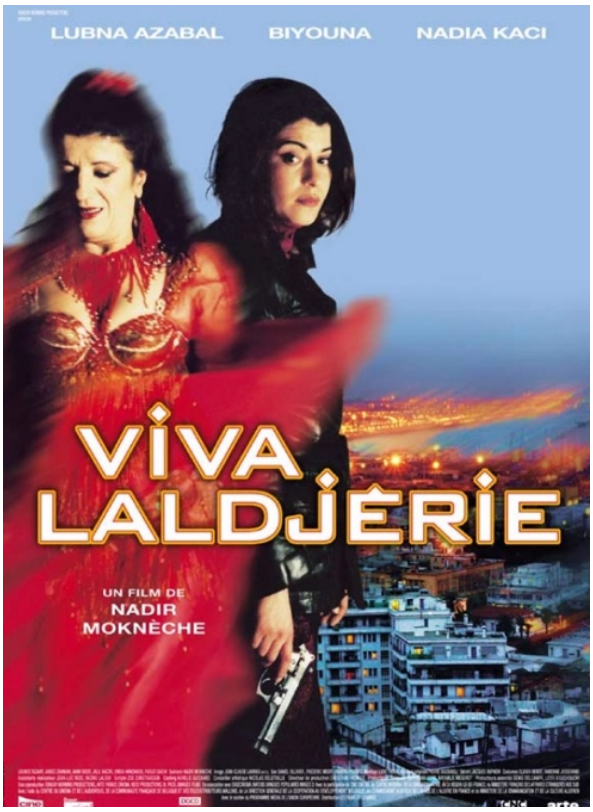

Figure 3. *Viva Laldjérie*'s poster with Biyouna and Lubna Azabal

All the film's characters speak French and as the former coloniser's language it provoked heated discussions about language and national identity upon the film's premiere in Algiers. The film brings the French language under scrutiny: while characters' shared use of French may appear to unite them, such unity is soon discovered to be impossible as I will discuss in relation to selected scenes. The use of French also brings with it a sense of history; however, I argue that the use of French does not demonstrate a nostalgia for a different period of Algerian history; instead French in the film represents the hybridisation of national identity and a reconciliation of the present with the colonial past. Similarly, the film's title *Viva Laldjérie*, contains the 'Algerianisation' of the French noun *L'Algérie*. The title alludes to a popular football anthem, '*One, Two, Three, Viva Laldjérie'*, which squarely locates the film in Algerian mass culture and represents the hybridisation of the Algerian language through French, English, and *darija*.

The film revolves around the daughter and mother: Goucem and Papicha. The two women have left Sidi Moussa, in the suburbs of Algiers, where massacres were numerous during the Black Decade. Papicha's husband died during that time and Goucem is the breadwinner working in a photographer's shop. Papicha seeks to uncover what has become of the Copacabana, a cabaret where she used to work as a dancer, and her quest leads her to roam around Algiers' bars, streets, and official buildings (such as the land registry). Fifi the prostitute entertains clients in her room and one of her regulars works for the state security. Fifi calls him *Chouchou* – an affectionate nickname. When Fifi and *Chouchou* are in the bathroom, Goucem enters Fifi's room and takes his gun and hides it. When *Chouchou* eventually realises, days later, that his gun is gone, he angrily confronts Fifi. She denies having the gun and escapes Chouchou's guard but is eventually abducted and murdered by his chauffeur. A worried Goucem looks for Fifi at the police station but eventually finds her body in the morgue, in the sewer-like basement. At the end of the film, Fifi is buried, Goucem ends her relationship with Dr Sassi who has re-married, and Papicha sings again in a restaurant.

To play Goucem, Moknèche employed Belgian-Moroccan actress Lubna Azabal, known to French audiences as she previously acted in *Loin* (Dir. André Techiné, 2001). Papicha is played by Biyouna, a well-known outspoken Algerian actress. Biyouna made her debut as a singer in cabarets (in the Copacabana when she was 19) and was known for her role in a renowned 1974 television series – *Al Hariq*, an adaptation of the novel *La Grande maison* (1952) by Algerian writer Mohammed Dib. Like many Algerian artists, Biyouna had to live in hiding during the Black Decade and her role in *Le Harem de Madame Osmane* (Moknèche's first feature) gave a boost to her career in France and allowed her return to Algerian television

after over two decades of absence. Between 2002 and 2005, Biyouna achieved great success with the Ramadhan trilogy *Nass Mlah City,* and the Algerian public appreciated her sense of humour, and her eccentric and exuberant character. Nadia Kaci (Fifi) is an Algerian actress who has acted in numerous Algerian and French films. Kaci also left Algeria for France during the Black Decade.

Unlike his first feature *Le Harem de Madame Osmane* (discussed in Chapter Four), where women are mainly constrained to a house and the film shot in Morocco, Moknèche mainly shot *Viva Laldjérie* on location in Algiers and the city and its suburbs are very much present in the narrative. Algiers is filmed in long shots with its labyrinthine alleys and stairs following Goucem and Papicha's wanderings in the city. The events take place during winter and Algiers is depicted as a bustling yet somewhat grim city under a gloomy light and rain. The city is filmed day and night, insisting on social class differences as Moknèche contrasts spacious apartments with the small pension room where Papicha and Gouceme live, the neglected streets of Algiers and the immaculate facades of buildings. Many scenes take place in public transport (bus, taxi) registering the film in a hyper realistic aesthetic, which plunges the viewer into the daily life of the characters. These street scenes are often without dialogue, only punctuated by the music of Pierre Bastaroli in which dominates a piano which accentuate the film's melancholic atmosphere.

In the opening credits Moknèche introduces the city and characters, to familiarise the viewer with the settings. A static camera depicts a crowded street in the manner of a documentary; the population is diverse. The next shot focuses on a woman at work, who we learn to be Goucem, one of many individuals in this busy city. The scholar Marie- Pierre Ulloa argues that this opening scene obscures

Algiers's specific identity; it becomes any modern, busy urban centre.[243] However, the sound of the *adhan* – call to prayer – indicates that we are in a Muslim country. The *adhan* recurs through the film and is used to indicate the time of the day and punctuate the daily lives of the protagonists. The *adhan* also recalls Merzak Allouache's film *Bab El Oued City*, in which the *adhan* and megaphone feature prominently to mark the presence of religion in the national space.[244]

Upon its release *Viva Laldjérie* stirred different reactions in France and in Algeria. French journalists celebrated the film while Algerian journalists criticised its depiction of sexual freedoms in Algeria and the use of French. The film was relatively well received in France attracting 200,000 viewers.[245] It benefitted from French distribution, promoted as a foreign, independent, auteur, art house film. In Algeria, *Viva Laldjérie* was premiered to journalists then distributed in the six cinemas of Algiers.[246] DVDs of the film were not available in Algeria, even bootlegged ones, nor was it broadcast on national television; it was only shown on the French-German television channel Arte. *Viva Laldjérie* was screened at various international film festivals, attracting interest largely because of its depiction of Arab women, and its representation of a new vision for North African film directors.

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[243] Marie-Pierre Ulloa, 'Le Corps féminin maghrébin au cinéma à travers la réception de *Satin Rouge*, *Viva Laldjérie* et *Rachida* en Amérique du Nord', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 134 (2013) < http://remmm.revues.org/8382 > [accessed 13 January 2013].

[244] Released in 1994, the film narrates how a young baker, Boualem, steals the speaker of the mosque that is placed on his building's top roof because it prevents him from sleeping. The ensuing events will lead Boualem to confront a group of Islamists who impose moral and religious restrictions to the inhabitants and lead him to leave Algeria for France.

[245] '*Viva Laldjérie*', AlloCiné website <http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm_ gen_cfilm=50333.html> [accessed 20 May 2013].

[246] Daikha Dridi, 'Lorsque Alger regarde *Viva Laldjérie*', *Bebelmed*, 20 April 2004 <http://www.babelmed.net/article/588-lorsque-alger-regarde-viva-laldjerie/> [accessed 20 May 2013].

In Algiers, the first screening of the film for an assembly of journalists and state officials on the 4th April 2004 benefited from much coverage in the French press because journalists were already present in Algeria to report on the presidential election. French newspapers – the intellectual *Le Monde* and the left-wing daily *Libération* – focused on the reactions of Algerians to the film. The main issues raised by Algerian commentators were the film's use of French, its French funding, and its depiction of women's nudity, prostitution and same-sex relationships, subjects deemed taboo within Algerian society. Florence Aubenas, a French journalist, reported the words of an Algerian journalist from *El Watan* (a French-language newspaper): 'C'est du pur Orientalisme […] Ce n'est pas un film fait par un réalisateur algérien mais par des producteurs français'.[247] The journalist Salim Beydu from the *Quotidien d'Oran*, told Moknèche: 'Vous montrez les bas-fonds d'Alger comme si c'était le quotidien de tous les Algérois. Vous montrez des prostituées, des homosexuels, vous vouliez choquer, c'est tout'. Another critic from *El Watan* stated: 'Est-ce que vous connaissez vraiment l'Algérie, monsieur Moknèche ? L'Algérie des cabarets, c'est celle des fantasmes de Paris', to which Moknèche replied 'Je suis un artiste. Si j'ai envie de parler de 5% du pays, j'en ai le droit'.[248] Moknèche further stated that Algerians are always afraid that their enemies would laugh at them, instead he hopes that his films would serve as 'collective therapy'.[249] While Algerian journalists questioned the authenticity of the images,

[247] Florence Aubenas, 'Trois minutes et demie de sexe qu'Alger a du mal à avaler', *Libération*, 7 April 2004 <https://next.liberation.fr/cinema/2004/04/07/trois-minutes-et-demie-de-sexe-qu-alger-a-du-mal-a-avaler_475296> [accessed 20 May 2013].
[248] Ibid.
[249] Tewfik Hakem, 'Les scènes d'amour et de drague dérangent à Alger', *Le Monde*, 6 April 2004 <https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2004/04/06/les-scenes-d-amour-et-de-drague-derangent-a-alger_360188_1819218.html> [accessed 20 May 2013].

and accused Moknèche of distorting the image of Algerians, Moknèche's response stresses his authorial choice, and the subjective part inherent to film production.

Moknèche's use of the French language was also perceived as evidence of his denial of his Algerian identity. Moknèche was blamed, by Algerian journalists, for not using *darija* to suggest the authenticity of his characters.[250] The director argued that he could not find enough Algerian actors who spoke *darija* competently, because most were trained in Classical Arabic.[251] He added that Loubna Azabal speaks Arabic with a Moroccan accent and it would have taken time to get her to speak *darija* with an Algerian accent.[252] The French press described how Moknèche struggled to justify his decision, and that his most acceptable response was about the distance that the French language had created, which gave him space to confront taboos in Algerian society, such as homosexuality, prostitution and nudity.[253]

In another interview, Moknèche stated that 'le français n'est pas une langue étrangère en Algérie, c'est une des langues algériennes'.[254] His intention, hence, was to reconnect his Algerian audience with the French language and to remind them of its place in Algeria's multivalent national identity and history. Moknèche observed that French is already employed in Algerian literature; hence its use in a film is not illegitimate or unprecedented.[255] Moknèche later stated, 'Ce n'est pas parce que vous mangez un croissant que vous êtes Français': language, he implies, does not determine identity.[256]

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[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Aubenas, 'Trois minutes et demie de sexe qu'Alger a du mal à avaler'.
[255] '*Viva Laldjérie* Press Kit', Films du Losange website <http://www.filmsdulosange.fr/uploads/presskits/4ae93e0a9707b0b588761335dcbd5d0ffb756da2.pdf?filmsdulosange=88440or1k5 t8h7f064 qqbmqir7> [accessed 18 May 2013].
[256] 'Délice Paloma: Interview Nadir Moknèche', Dailymotion website

The Algerian public also reacted badly upon viewing the film in Algiers, some viewers declared that they expected a comedy with the popular Biyouna but instead they were met with images of nudity from the first ten minutes (Goucem is filmed naked after a sexual intercourse with Dr Sassi).[257] Others claimed that images of nudity were acceptable for western films but not for Algerian ones.[258] *Viva Laldjérie* is indeed the first Algerian film to display women completely naked (Fifi getting out of her bath) or engaged in a sexual act as well as openly displaying male desire for other men, such scenes are usually only suggested in Algerian films. At first the film was not censored in Algeria, but some cinemas judged it too crude and the sex and naked scenes were removed from the narrative. Similarly, the public wished to hear Algiers' *darija* instead of French, one of the viewers said 'd'entendre parler français systématiquement alors que l'histoire se passe à Alger, ça fait bizarre. Pendant tout le film, j'ai eu le sentiment désagréable que Biyouna récitait'.[259]

In France, these issues played out differently. *Viva Laldjérie* was praised by French critics as one of the first films to depict Algeria in a vivid and open way. The French press did not comment on the use of French, which apparently seemed normal even though it was an Algerian film. The actress Biyouna attracted particular attention from the French press, because she was the only one of the main actors who lived in Algeria. Only the film critic Olivier Barlet, writing in *Africultures* stated that seeing an Algerian film in French was upsetting, since *darija* is the daily language and the Algeria Moknèche reconstructed in French was not

<http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5kkbg_delice-palo ma-interview-nadir-mokne_music> [accessed 22 May 2013].
[257] Dridi, 'Lorsque Alger regarde Viva Laldjérie'.
[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid.

recognisable.[260] Like Algerian journalists, Barlet links *darija* to authenticity.

In terms of academic reception, Marie-Pierre Ulloa argues that the choice of French was a political gesture, because to speak French is to refuse the authoritarian imposition of a singular national identity (Arab and Muslim); it is also to refuse the efforts of religious fundamentalists to erase modern Algeria's colonial inheritance.[261] Ulloa also observes that the film was often discussed as if it were a documentary rather than fiction, the audience who viewed the film at San Francisco's film festival assumed the film to be a realistic or 'true' representation of events.[262] I agree with Ulloa's argument that Moknèche made use of French to explore the hybridisation of Algerian identity. However, I want to argue that the use of French in *Viva Laldjérie* does not contribute to its realism, but instead reveals Moknèche's authorial presence and engagement in an ongoing debate about language and national identity.

The linguist Fabio Rossi states that film dialogue in general presents a high degree of coherence, cohesion, and consciousness because it bears 'traces of the written screenplay'.[263] Analysing a set of Italian comedies, Rossi identifies a distance between orality and film dialogue; the latter is usually related more to literary language.[264] Rossi sees that the scripted film language 'contributes to produce cinematic discourse as a compromise between two different poles: not only written and spoken, but also private and public, formal and informal, mimetic and

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[260] Olivier Barlet, 'Viva Laldjérie', *Africultures*, 1 April 2004 <http://africultures.com/viva-laldjerie-3338/> [accessed 20 April 2013].
[261] Ulloa, 'Le Corps féminin maghrébin au cinéma à travers la réception de *Satin Rouge*, *Viva Laldjérie* et *Rachida* en Amérique du Nord'.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Fabio Rossi, 'Discourse Analysis of Film Dialogues: Italian Comedy Between Linguistic Realism and Pragmatic Non-Realism', in *Telecinematic Discourse: Approaches to the Language of Films and Television Series*, ed. by Roberta Piazza, Michael Berdnarek and Fabio Rossi (Amsterdam: John Benajmins Publishing Company, 2011), pp. 21-46 (p. 21).
[264] Ibid., p. 25.

fictional, reflecting the author's intentions and audience's expectations'.[265] *Viva Laldjérie* conveys a similar formalism, by way of Moknèche's script, the characters' manner of speaking, and its 'theatrical' mise-en-scène. Another scene depicts a cigarette seller who is fluent in French, unlikely in 'real life', which again signifies the film's fictional, rather than a documentary aesthetic.

The characters' shared use of French does not unite them but exacerbates their differences and French serves to demonstrate ideological diversity and assert exclusive group identities and hierarchies.[266] In one scene Papicha is in a taxi, the group of passengers discusses a Chinese woman speaking French; one of them imitates her. The impersonation is redolent of the racism that followed Algeria's decision in 2003 to open to Chinese investors and immigration.[267] An unseen man next to the driver reads aloud a story from the newspaper about how former singers from the Copacabana had gathered in Paris to remember the cabaret. One of the other passengers complains that the singers would be better opening a mosque: 'Ça ne leur effleurerait même pas l'esprit'. The passenger's formal use of French is associated with her conservatism, even though French is elsewhere used to articulate a range of ideological positions. Papicha, filmed in close-up is hurt by the passenger's comments about the singers' need for redemption. She asks the car to stop and walks off angrily. French in this scene does not serve as *lingua franca*, as a language that brings together different people.

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[265] Ibid.
[266] Kathryn A. Woolard and Bambi B. Schieffelin, 'Language ideology', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 23.1 (1994), 55-82 (p. 55).
[267] After the political turmoil and the increase of oil prices, the Algerian State initiated several infrastructure projects (social housing, roads, and airports). Chinese companies (with their workers) came to Algeria. Some of the Chinese workers stayed after the projects were over and opened small shops.

Class, language and exclusion are also experienced when Chouchou later realizes his gun is gone. In *Viva Laldjérie*, Fifi, Papicha and Chouchou's nicknames create familiarity but also maintain a distance as the spectator gets only partial information about their real names. Fifi's real name is disclosed only when she disappears, Papicha's name is Madame Sandjak, and Chouchou remains known only by his nickname. Fifi is blamed, and Chouchou pursues her through the streets of Algiers. To escape, Fifi joins a wedding procession of bourgeois women dressed in western clothes; she enters a car, in which a little boy sits on the front seat. A medium-shot enhances the anxiety of Fifi and the state of hysteria of the three women who are sitting in the back. One of them shouts, 'Mais vous allez descendre, descendez, descendez'. They stop the car and phone an older woman, whom they ask for advice. This older woman is shown wearing a fur coat, which emphasises her petit-bourgeois status. She arrives at Fifi's car and ejects her from it.

The scene clearly presents the women's different social classes, their lack of solidarity, and the perpetuation of patriarchal values: the young boy sits in the front and is the focus of the bourgeois women's concerns. These women do not care about Fifi; even worse, they make her situation more difficult. These women are representative of a new bourgeoisie that emerged in Algeria in the last decade. As Yahia H. Zoubir argues, the gap between the rich and the poor widened in Algeria because of the austerity programs, coupled with the corruption and arbitrary laws of the period.[268] In 2003, a period of recovery and pacification, a *nouveau riche* class emerged which exhibited its wealth and newfound social status.

[268] Yahia H. Zoubir, 'The Painful Transition from Authoritarianism in Algeria', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 15.3 (1993), 83-110 (p. 83).

Mustapha Hamil argues that Fifi's death emphasises how Algerian society values the maintenance of social cohesion over the individual, and I argue over a shared language.[269] Hamil's argument implies that the women in the car preferred the appearance of order to Fifi's safety. He suggests that Fifi's death can be read as a punishment. I would argue that Fifi's death, rather than a punishment, represents the resurgence of male state power, with which the women in the car are complicit. Fifi's ejection from the car reflects her ejection from this society of women, this social class of which she is not a part. Even if she speaks French, her language cannot transcend her class. In addition, the scene illustrates how these upper-class, French-speaking women are 'conscious of the advantages attached to the ability to use it, and would not be willing to give it up, even if they are otherwise outraged by its presence as a reminder of colonialism'.[270]

Therefore, a neo-patriarchy is maintained, and its contours demonstrated by way of the characters' access to the French language. Malika Mehdid describes neo-patriarchy as the encounter between modernity and tradition, as a 'modernised patriarchy' that maintains the dominance of the father within the household and state'.[271] These women, who reject the lower-class Fifi, are also modern women, fashionable, independent, and self-assured. Hence, speaking French does not erase class boundaries or encompass one in the national space; French only draws attention to Fifi's class and helplessness.

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[269] Mustapha Hamil, 'Itineraries of Revival and Ambivalence in Postcolonial North African Cinema: From Benlyazid's *Door to the Sky* to Moknèch's *Viva Laldjérie*', *African Studies Review*, 52.3 (2009), 73-87 (p. 85).
[270] Hélène Gill, 'Language Choice, Language Policy and the Traidition-Modernity Debate in Culturally Mixed Postcolonial Communities', in *Language and Society in the Middle East and North Africa: Studies in Variation and Identity*, ed. by Yasir Suleiman (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999), pp. 122-136 (p. 128).
[271] Malika Mehdid, 'Engendering the Nation-State: Women, Patriarchy and Politics in Algeria', in *Women and the State: International perspectives,* ed. by Shirini M. Rai and Geraldine Livesley (London: Taylor & Francis, 1996), pp. 78-102 (p. 80).

French is also not used to revive nostalgic moments of France's presence in Algeria. Although Papicha masters the French language, she does not identify with France. For example, when Papicha returns to the pension from checking where the cabaret would allegedly be rebuilt, the concierge asks Papicha about the Copacabana, and if she will visit the singers in Paris. Though Papicha might satisfy her nostalgia in Paris, instead she imagines her future only in Algeria. She explains she is unwilling to go through the lengthy and demeaning process of applying for a visa, and decides instead to bring the singers back, as a 'return home'. Papicha is attached to Algeria and does not feel the need to leave her country; although she speaks French, she does not relate to France.[272] However, a long shot shows a western painting and bottles of wine on the table, so even as Papicha distances herself from France geographically, it remains present.

The objects in the pension – an old piano and a clock – testify to France's lingering presence. The pension is located in a quarter referred to by its French name, Debussy, despite the imposition of Arabic place names more recently. This contributes to the film's ambiguous nostalgia for an era when the streets and places were still named in French, and the urban population (mainly French) had a good command of French.[273] The French language, in the context of the film, carries deeply ideological connotations, mostly in relation to Algeria's colonised past.[274]

Nostalgia is defined as a longing for home, and also a desire to return to a particular time. Linda Hutcheon defines nostalgia as the escape from the present that

[272] The pieds noirs were the European settlers in Algeria.They did not want to leave Algeria for France but had a sense of belonging to France.
[273] Claude Debussy (1862-1918) is a classical composer. Debussy was the name given to a cinema in the same quarter; its name has been arabised to Al Khyam.
[274] Woolard and Schieffelin, p. 236.

brings an 'imagined, safe, and coherent ideal past'.[275] However Papicha is not nostalgic for France nor its colonial presence, only for her cabaret past and her dead husband. On a broader scale, Moknèche's project does not so much conjure nostalgia for French colonialism as represent an effort towards a new 'hybrid' identity.

Moknèche's film – like Papicha's desire within it – aims at reconstructing a present that simultaneously acknowledges and draws on the past, in the film's case through language and mise-en-scène. Moknèche evokes a 'past-present', which Homi Bhabha describes as 'a contingent "in-between" space' that 'innovates and interrupts the performance of the present' and 'becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living'.[276] Moknèche is not nostalgic for colonialism, but he is connected with both western liberal culture and Algerian realities. The use of French in the film's Algerian setting is ideological; it is not a neutral medium, nor a *lingua franca* but through the various ways that he uses French in the film, then, Moknèche produces an image of Algeria as '*Laldjérie*', a French-Arabic hybrid.

'On est tous marocains'? *Marock*: Investigating Religion and Identity

One of the box office hits in Morocco in 2006 was not a foreign venture such as a popular Indian or Hollywood blockbuster, but a Moroccan feature, *Marock*, directed by Leila Marrakchi. The film sold more than 130,000 tickets in the two months after its release; in 2006 cinema attendance in Morocco averaged only two and a half

[275] Linda Hutcheon, and Mario J. Valdés, 'Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern: A Dialogue', *Poligrafías. Revista de Teoría Literaria y Literatura comparada,* 3 (1998), <http://revistas.unam.mx/index.php/poligrafias/article/download/31312/28976> [accessed 13 January 2011].
[276] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 10.

million annually, mostly for Hollywood and Indian films.[277] *Marock*, the first feature-length film by Marrakchi (who had previously directed two short films which were nominated in several international film festivals) was selected in the 2005 Cannes Festival in the section *Un Certain Regard*. This selection aims at promoting films which offer fresh and provocative perspectives on various topics: *Marock* focuses on Morocco, and an aspect of Moroccan culture which, as the French press recognised, is rarely depicted on screen.[278]

Funded by France and filmed in Casablanca with a mixed crew of French and Moroccans, *Marock* takes the upper class as its primary subject and narrates, mainly in French, a love story between a young upper-class Muslim teenage girl, Rita, and a Jewish boy called Yuri. The story is set in the late 1990s, during Ramadhan, under former King Hassan II's reign. Both Rita and Yuri live in bourgeois surroundings in Casablanca; and the film depicts intimate scenes between the protagonists as well as the lifestyles of the upper class: partying, drinking, smoking, and car racing. Rita is portrayed as a free-spirited, spoiled young girl who disregards both social and religious conventions; she does not fast and goes out with a Jewish boy. When Rita passes her baccalaureate, she goes to celebrate with her friends. Yuri is supposed to join them, but he is killed in a car accident en route. At the end of the film, Rita leaves for France.

Marock clearly highlights the religious differences between its protagonists, but despite these, Rita and Yuri feel Moroccan over and above all else, and French allows them both to transcend religious identity. In fact, both Muslims and Jews have French as their primary language in the film and I aim at investigating how

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[277] Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema?: A Historical and Critical Study, 1956-2006*, p. 15.
[278] Florence Ben Sadoune, *Elle*, in AlloCiné *Marock* Press Critics, AlloCiné website < http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm-60727/critiques/presse/> [Accessed 20 January 2013].

French is the language of shared identity. I also argue that while Yuri, as a Jewish boy, was perceived as a threat to Rita, the Muslim girl, and as such a threat to Moroccan identity, the use of French, did not constitute any threat to national identity.

Marrakchi's film is very personal, although not autobiographical. Like her protagonist, Marrakchi is from a privileged background, and left for France after her baccalaureate. She wrote the script and used her friends' houses as filming locations. The non-professional actor who plays Rita is Marrakchi's cousin, Morjana Alaoui, who at the time was studying at the American University of Paris. Marrakchi sets the film in 1997 to coincide with her own memories of a time when the bourgeoisie was more privileged, under the previous King, than it is today.[279] These details create the impression that Marrakchi filmed a real world to which she had access because of her social background.

Upon it release, *Marock* drew the attention of the critics as well as the various political parties and stirred heated debates in Morocco. The polemic began when *Marock* was screened at the *Festival du Film National* in Tangier in December 2005. The one scene that has attracted particularly heated discussion is a love scene between Rita and Yuri. Rita stares at the Star of David hanging from Yuri's neck, which he removes and places around Rita's neck. By removing the symbol from her sight and placing it alongside her own religious artefact, the hand of Fatima, he implies that she (and the viewer) should put aside their religious differences. One director, Mohammed Asli, openly criticised this scene and the film as 'Zionist'.[280] Asli considered *Marock* an insult to Moroccans and Muslims; and contended that

[279] Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema?: A Historical and Critical Study, 1956-2006,* p. 273.
[280] Jaoud Mdidech, 'La polémique sur Marock met en lumière le culte du non-débat', *La Vie Eco*, 20 January 2006 <https://www.lavieeco.com/culture/la-polemique-sur-amarocka-met-en-lumiere-le-culte-du-non-debat-6759/> [accessed 12 June 2016].

Marrakchi and her film were not properly Moroccan, and as such they did not deserve to be presented in a national film festival. Asli's claim that the film promotes a Zionist ideology clearly reproduced a common understanding – promoted by the Egyptian Brotherhood movements and fuelled by anti-Israeli politics – which equates Jews with Zionists.[281] As well as taking issue with the film's French funding, Asli pointed out that Marrakchi is married to a Jewish director and lives in France.

The PJD, through the Arabic newspaper *Attajdid*, condemned the film.[282] The PJD took religion, specifically Islam, to be inherent to Moroccan national identity (as exposed in the introduction). Before the release of the film in cinemas in Morocco in May 2005, the PJD asked the government to ban the film by contending that the director had attacked the symbols of Islam, particularly prayer and Ramadhan.[283] Journalist Salma Dekki explained that the PJD intended to use laws against artworks that attack national values to ban the film.[284] One well-known representative of the PJD, Lahcen Daoudi, confirmed that the party wanted to challenge the government over the film in order to question the government's commitment to religious discipline more broadly.[285] It was reported that in mosques there were calls for a boycott of the film, and cinema owners were anxious about screening the film.[286]

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[281] Ibid.
[282] Karim Boukhari, 'Marock: le film de tous les tabous', *TelQuel*, 29 April 2006, p. 40.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Salma Dakki, 'Marock au Maroc: une polémique par presse interposée', Yabiladi website <http://www.yabiladi.com/article-analyse-103.html > [Accessed 20 January 2013].
[285] Lahcen Daoudi is an economist who has been educated in France and is Francophone. Newspapers and magazines such as *TelQuel* labelled him the 'soft face' of the PJD: he represents openness, he was educated in France, and modernity while he is attached to Islamic values.
[286] AFP, 'Maroc: une association islamiste appelle au boycott du film Marock', Yabiladi website < https://www.yabiladi.com/forum/marock-debarque-bled-65-1091842-page=4.html> [Accessed 20 April 2013].

Because the PJD saw *Marock* as essentially realist, it was particularly emphatic in its calls for censorship. Francis Couvares examined Hollywood's censorship in the 1930s and argued that 'censorship battles help mark out the terrain of conflict over discursive practices in a culture'.[287] Debates over censorship serve to 'reveal what is at stake whenever people at a given time in a given social setting negotiate the boundaries of what may be said and heard, or shown and seen'.[288] The PJD's calls for censorship were based on arguments over religious morality. The National Union of Theatre likewise attacked the film and called for its boycott even before its release.[289] The attacks were led by the union's president, Mohammed Hassan Al Joundi.[290] Al Joundi stated in the Arabic-language newspaper *Attajdid* that *Marock* praises cultural colonialism and Francophone culture, that it gives a negative image of Moroccans and Morocco and serves only the material interests of Marrakchi.[291]

Newspapers and the film's advocates, such as the French-language magazines *TelQuel, La Vie Eco, Le Journal, Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, pleaded for *Marock*'s right to freedom of expression. *TelQuel* argued that *Marock* tackles taboo subjects (female sexuality and inter-faith relationships) that need to be addressed in public.[292] The newspaper *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc* supported the film, despite what it

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[287] Francis G. Couvares, 'Introduction: Hollywood, Censorship, and American Culture', *American Quarterly,* 44.4 (1992), 509-524 (p. 510).
[288] Ibid.
[289] 'Le PJD manipule Hassan Al Joundi', *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 4 January 2006 <http://aujourdhui.ma/focus/le-pjd-manipule-hassan-al-joundi-38127 > [Accessed 28 March 2013].
[290] Al Joundi is a prominent figure in the Moroccan artistic scene; he is one of the founders of the Theatre Movement in Morocco and a member of the National Radio and Television Company since 1957. Al Joundi also appeared in several films, one the most famous is *Al-Rissala* (1977) an epic about the life of the Prophet Mohammed.
[291] *Attajdid* is spokesman of the *Movement for Unity and Reform* (MUR), an Islamic association politically close to the PJD. Dakki, 'Marock au Maroc: Une polémique par presse interposée'
[292] Boukhari, 'Marock: le film de tous les tabous'.

saw as its naïve message.[293] Journalist Driss Ajbali argued that *Marock* offers social criticism of a section of Moroccan society which is rarely criticised, but only 'light' criticism.[294] Furthermore, journalists Fedoua Tounassi and Hicham Houdaifa observed how the other political parties abstained from the debate and only attacked the PJD's monopoly on questions of religion.[295] The dividing line was not clear-cut, however. Many of those who denounced the film claimed that one did not need to be part of the PJD to dislike it.

The political researcher Anna Triandafyllidou explores what constitutes a nation, and explains how the 'other' is produced, and her work is important in understanding the reactions that *Marock* has stirred. Triandafyllidou argues that the identity of a nation is defined and/or re-defined through the influence of 'significant others', namely other nations or ethnic groups that are perceived to threaten the nation in its 'distinctiveness, authenticity, and/or independence'.[296] Triandafyllidou writes: 'identity and belonging to a nation introduces a dichotomy between who we "are" and who are the "others"'.[297] Amongst the elements that distinguish the 'we' from the 'others' are religion and language. Triandafyllidou explains that religion, culture, and language are important 'not only to the degree that they reinforce the nation's identity but because they differentiate the in-group from the out-group'. The 'other' can be within the nation (e.g. immigrants from different ethnic backgrounds) or outside the nation.[298]

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[293] Driss Ajbali, 'Label marocanité: "Marock" un film marocain', *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 24 February 2006 <http://aujourdhui.ma/chroniques/label-marocanite-marock-un-film-marocain-39406> [Accessed 30 March 2013].
[294] Ibid.
[295] Fedoua Tounassi and Hichem Houdaifa, 'Marock: le vrai débat', *Le Journal*, 27 May 2006, p. 20.
[296] Anna Triandafyllidou, 'National Identity and the "Other"', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21.4 (1998), 593-612 (pp. 596-597).
[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid., p. 594.

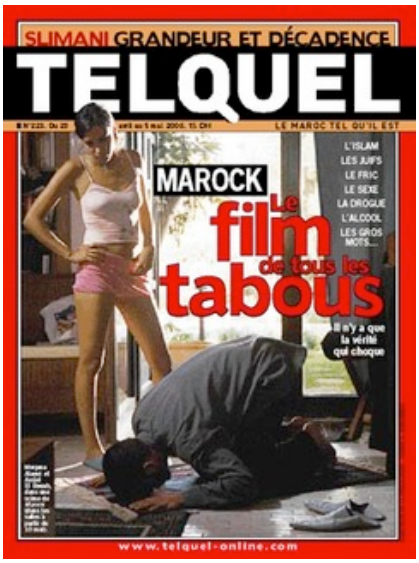

Figure 4. *TelQuel's* cover page, 2006, Mao praying and Rita standing

In the case of *Marock*, the PJD's focus on religious matters and the attacks on the film's depiction of Moroccan identity reflect how the party linked religion to national identity and considered Moroccan Jews as 'others'. The PJD emphasised a religiously-determined Moroccan identity and established itself as a party that directed criticisms towards cultural issues, rather than political matters or social class inequalities. Furthermore, one issue that demands attention is why Moroccan viewers, especially Islamists, assumed that *Marock* was a documentary – understood as a reflection of a reality which one can trust.

Todd McGowan's account of cinema's encounter with reality describes cinema as 'the site of a traumatic encounter with the Real, with the utter failure of the spectator's seemingly safe distance and assumed mastery'.[299] McGowan explains that spectators subjectively interpret the 'field of the visible', which affects the extent to which the spectator feels involved or excluded from the scene.[300] Because *Marock* depicts a type of Moroccan lifestyle not led by Islamists – a lifestyle of a

[299] Todd McGowan, 'Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and Its Vicissitudes', *Cinema Journal,* 42.3 (2003), 27-47 (p. 29).
[300] Ibid.

different class, with a different language – those Islamists understood the film as a depiction of real life; because the demographics which the film depicts as sidelined and oppressed are the same demographics with which the Islamists can empathise, so the film was understood as a 'real' documentary articulation of their oppression.

The film's style, however, is far from realistic. The film's depiction of a particularly westernised group of teenagers, with all the attendant commodities and anxieties, has led Brian T. Edwards to describe *Marock* as a 'teen pic', and to argue that Marrakchi uses a Hollywood aesthetic in her filming, particularly in terms of music, mise-en-scène, and narrative structure.[301] Edwards is correct to observe that *Marock* adopts many of the tropes of Hollywood teen pics. The film uses a recognisable light-dark narrative structure: the days are bright, shiny and carefree; the nights are devoted to parties and romantic encounters. During the day, Rita goes to the Lycée or meets her friends Asma, Sofia and Driss, while at night she goes to parties, in houses or nightclubs, or meets Yuri. The dark nights allow for an intimate space for the protagonists, but they also establish the spectator as the only witness of Rita and Yuri's rendezvous. The viewer's privileged access to moments of intimacy, and the way those intimate scenes are shot with many extreme close-ups and dark lighting, may explain why the film's opponents have treated it as a documentary. While it is true that like a teen pic, *Marock* has no explicit sex scenes, though sex is strongly implied, Marrakchi makes use other elements – such as framing, lighting and soundtrack– which make *Marock* more than a 'teen pic'.

[301] Brian T. Edwards, '*Marock* in Morocco: Reading Moroccan Films in the Age of Circulation', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 12.3 (2007), 387-307 (p. 287).

Figure 5. Sofia, Rita, and Asma on Rita's terrace studying for the baccalaureate

Figure 6. Rita in her room

Figure 7. Rita and Yuri at the beach house

Perhaps *Marock* might be described as a hybrid Moroccan and Hollywood film, from an aesthetic point of view. The use of Moroccan and western music in its soundtrack would suggest as much. However, I do not favour this reading, and instead argue that the film is an accurate reflection of Moroccan culture, which is

itself influenced by western culture. Music, in my reading, signifies class difference as much as national identity. Marrakchi explains that she wanted the film's title, *Marock*, to illustrate the contradictions of the young generation in Morocco: *Marock* contracts '*Maroc*', the French name for Morocco, and 'rock', as in music; one represents tradition, the other modernity. The film's poster declares, '*La Jeunesse...Sa quête de liberté, sa soif d'interdits*'. Most of the film's soundtrack is rock music, which signifies the freedom of youth – but only for upper-class youths who were never anything other than free, which renders the film's slogan farcical. Most of the time only the working-class maids listen to traditional Moroccan music, but Yuri does too in his car, when Marrakchi wants to affirm his Moroccan identity.

The film constantly stresses the separation between its two worlds, between its Francophone upper classes and Arabic-speaking lower classes. Rita's mathematics teacher, for example, has a small car, Yuri has a big car; the teacher also has an inelegant outfit and an unrefined accent when he speaks French. While Rita watches the type of Hollywood film that Edwards associates with *Marock* itself, Yuri's servant and chauffeur watches Mexican television soap dubbed into Standard Arabic, while the maids in Rita's kitchen dance to Moroccan music. The two worlds rarely communicate. As Rita's father reads his newspaper, the maid arranges the table: dressed – almost concealed –in white, she is invisible to him; he ignores her but speaks to his wife, who only addresses the maid in Arabic. In many scenes Rita – whom various other characters address as *lalla*, a reverent name given to all women of higher social status – is filmed in her opulent house, free of her movements as she circulates without restrictions while the maids are consigned to the kitchen or the house. The camera emphasises this sidelining of the maids and servants, particularly through framing: the camera itself marginalises the presence of lower class and

subordinate Moroccans. When Rita is onscreen, she is the camera's focus, but oftentimes in the background a maid can be seen kneeling and cleaning the floor, or a gardener's lawnmower can be heard, and his silhouette can be perceived.

The mise-en-scène, framing, and diegetic sounds of the film also emphasise symbols of Islam, reminding the viewer that Morocco is a predominantly Muslim country. The story takes place during Ramadhan, so the call for prayer is heard at different times of the day and marks the time for Rita to return home (or to go out). Hassan II's mosque is filmed in a long shot on several occasions. At the same time, and as a contrast, the language used in the film insists on the Jewishness of Yuri. His full name is repeated several times: Yuri Benchetrit. Rita's brother Mao strongly opposes her relationship with a Jew, which he considers to be shameful for a Muslim woman. Mao has recently returned from living in England, and although he was known for gambling and partying, he has become religious, fasting and praying. His conversion to Islam is associated with his anti-Semitism, even though his conversion is also a response to his own guilt at having killed a boy when driving his car. Rita calls Mao's conversion an 'Islam de fils à papa' – that is, a bourgeois Islam only followed to clear his conscience. Mao calls Yuri '*yihudi'*, the Arabic word for Jew, but which has become known as an insult. This is one of the few times Arabic is used, and it is used to alienate and marginalise the Jewish character.

Referring to religion is what separates the protagonists. Mao, who has started fasting, considers the whole family to be 'non-believers'. He says so in French. In this instance, French has a double function to assert Mao's religious beliefs and to distance him from Yuri although they share the same language. The double role of French is highlighted when Rita's father states in French 'un jour de plus et j'aurais fini par tuer quelqu'un'. While the family is gathered watching the prayer that marks

the end of Ramadhan and is led by the King, the father expresses his happiness that Ramadhan has ended, as it was unbearable. French in this case dissociates the father from religion.

Rita is not religious; she refuses to fast during Ramadhan, which she signals by speaking in *darija* when she dismisses the maid who comes to wake her up at dawn so she can eat before fasting. Rita asks if the maid 'understands Arabic'. Although Rita shares the same language as the maid, she does not feel obliged to observe the same rituals. Instead she chooses to speak mostly in French, which allows her to embrace a different identity, for example eating at McDonald's during Ramadhan. Her use of French is part of her rejection of religious obligations.

Language both divides and unifies the characters; its use is born out of the social practices of Muslims and Jews. Yuri's friends gathered at Yuri's house by the pool, framed as a group of young men drinking alcohol and joking, emphasise Yuri's Jewishness as belonging to their group and framed next to them. The young men point to Yuri and Rita's difference and call her an 'Arab'. One of Yuri's friends even claims that he cannot fall in love with an Arab, to which Yuri responds, 'on est tous Marocains'. Yuri thus equates 'Arab' with Muslim and allows 'Moroccan' to encompass Jews and Muslims. He hardly speaks *darija* in the film, only with his chauffeur, and though he listens to Moroccan music, Yuri remains identified with the other upper-class characters. He considers himself, however, to be predominantly Moroccan.

The relationship between Yuri and Rita is hence doubted by most people around them. Though Yuri does not doubt his own Moroccan-ness, the fact that he is Jewish is observed by everyone: Rita's chauffeur, Mao, his friends. Yuri puts the national before the religious, while Rita questions whether the religious belongs to

the national. When they meet in Yuri's car, Rita escaping her father's surveillance, Rita and Yuri are framed on the edge of a cliff facing the sea, and the Hassan II mosque is in the background, reminding the viewer of the predominance of Islam in Morocco. The camera then zooms inside the car, isolating the protagonists from the surroundings enhancing the intimacy between Rita and Yuri, and focusing on their faces. Rita suggests to Yuri that he converts to Islam, to which Yuri suggests that Rita converts to Judaism which she refuses. Rita's reaction is pragmatic, and an unspoken attitude deeply ingrained in Morocco's collective consciousness: when a woman wants to marry a non-Muslim, the man needs to convert. However, by affirming that it would be too shameful for her to convert to Judaism, Rita acknowledges the social position of Moroccan Jews, who are seen as lesser individuals than Muslim Moroccans, and as others who pose a threat to Moroccan identity. She ultimately believes that conversion would allow Jews to live easily in Morocco.

Although they remain conscious of their religious identities, the French language frees Yuri and Rita from religious constraints, in a way that Standard Arabic and *darija* do not. The transnational version of Moroccan identity represented by Yuri and Rita – an identity detached from religion – allows them to contemplate a life in France, because their identities are not bound to Morocco. Thus, *Marock* does not seek to convince the audience of Jews' embedded place in Morocco (in the manner of *Où vas-tu Moshé*? which I discuss in the next section); rather, the film suggests that Moroccan Jews (and secular Moroccans such as Rita) can maintain their identity within the national space as a parallel and hierarchized culture and world coexist within the same national space.

Où vas-tu Moshé? Re-Imagining Morocco's Jews

Où vas-tu Moshé? explores Jewish-Muslim co-existence in 1963, a time when many Moroccan Jews were leaving for Israel helped by Zionist associations after the onset of the Egyptian-Israeli conflict in 1956. The plot pivots around a small bar in Bejaad, a mountainous village where Jews and Muslims live together. An elected council, made of Muslim men, is seeking to close the bar, known as 'Chez Pierre' and owned by a dying French man. Mustapha, the bar's manager, intends to buy it, but his only chance of keeping the bar open is to invoke a Moroccan law that stipulates the bar can stay open if a non-Muslim resides in the village.[302]

While all the Jews are leaving for Israel with their families, Shlomo, a watch-maker and *oud* player, is the only Jew who stays behind, even after his wife and daughter have left. Mustapha endeavours to prevent Shlomo from leaving the village, mistranslating the letters that Shlomo's daughter Rachel sends him, written in French, in which she asks her father to join her in France. Towards the end of the film, Mustapha's son reveals to Shlomo the deception, and so Shlomo reluctantly leaves Bejaad to join Rachel in France. On his way, Shlomo encounters in Casablanca a Jew from the village, Brahem, known as the General, who was not taken to Israel due to his mental illness and is roaming in Casablanca's streets. Shlomo phones Mustapha to get Brahem back to the village, which allows the bar to remain open.

Où vas-tu Moshé? acknowledges Morocco's multicultural past and projects an idealised image of Morocco as a safe space for Jewish people, even if they

[302] Named in the film as Article 138, paragraph B of the 1963 Penal Code, though the law is entirely fictional. The real article of this name pertains to juvenile delinquency.

eventually left the country. Prior to their exile from Morocco, Jews predominantly lived in the *mellahs* – an area near the Sultan's palace, which symbolised protection by and submission to the local power.[303] In the film, they live together with Muslims, and the Morocco of *Où vas-tu Moshé?* is a cross-cultural and multifaceted nation. Through Shlomo, the film suggests that Morocco still has the potential to be more tolerant, which would involve accommodating Jews into the (currently Arab-Islamic) national narrative and acknowledging the cultural and social vacuum which their departure left. The film suggests that music and *darija*, rather than religion, will be the grounds on which national identity is constructed. However, *Où vas-tu Moshé?* fails in its attempt to place either at the core of Moroccan national identity. Ultimately, Shlomo is not accepted into post-independence Morocco. The *darija* he speaks – with a strong accent – marks him as an 'other' who cannot be included in the national narrative.

Où vas-tu Moshé? is Hassan Benjelloun's third feature. Known for his political films that denounce 'les années de plomb', Benjelloun's script draws on his own memories of witnessing his Jewish neighbours and friends leaving their village overnight.[304] *Où vas-tu Moshé?* was made on a low budget, with mostly state funding from state television 2M, the CCM, and supported by the Quebec national film production fund.[305] By the end of 2007, the film was ranked 10th in Morocco, having attracted 15,000 viewers.[306] It was also distributed in France, Canada and

[303] Daniel J. Schroeter, 'The Shifting Boundaries of Moroccan Jewish Identities', *Jewish Social Studies* 15.1(2008), 145-164 (p. 155).
[304] Barlet, 'Où vas-tu Moshé?, de Hassan Benjelloun', *Africultures*, 10 June 2007 <http://africultures.com/ou-vas-tu-moshe-finemachiyamoche-5968/> [accessed 10 April 2016].
[305] 'Où vas-tu Moshé?', Éléphant. Mémoire du cinéma québecois website <http://elephantcinema.quebec/films/ou-vas-tu-moshe_79282/> [accessed 4 May 2016].
[306] 'Box office des film marocains année 2007', CCM website <https://www.ccm.ma/inter/bilans/7-bilan.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2016].

Israel, as well as international film festivals. Shlomo is played by the real-life musician Simon Elbaz, who lived in Bejaad. Well-known Moroccan actors are also present in the film: Hassan Skalli (one of the musicians and Shlomo's friend) is a veteran actor of theatre and cinema and Abdelkader Lotfi (Mustapha) is known for his television roles.

Shot on location in Bejaad, the film centres on a few locations: the bar, Shlomo's house, the council office, the mosque. The film uses comedy and tragedy to convey its message, interwoven with documentary images and Rachel's voice-over in French commenting on the mass emigration of Jews to Israel. Making use of natural light, Benjelloun uses many long shots of the village and its traditional white houses, as well as its surroundings, mountains and trees, presenting it as a safe haven, or a lost paradise.

Shlomo is frequently shot in close-up with his oud, in an orchestra, signalling his attachment to Moroccan traditional music and the local community. In contrast, Mustapha is ostracised by his community, and his social exclusion is emphasised by the mise-en-scène and costume. Mustapha is visually isolated whenever he is outside the bar, either in the mosque or at the council. Even his costume distinguishes him from other men: he is shown in a traditional *jellaba* outfit, while the councillors are dressed in suits.

Figure 8. Shlomo playing *oud* in his bedroom with his wife

Despite its music, dance scenes and the animated discussions at the council, the film has a slow rhythm, and the editing fails to present a coherent story, jumping from scenes in Morocco to ones in Israel, where Bejaad's Jews have arrived. Nonetheless, the film was well received by the Moroccan press, where it was taken as a sign of Morocco's tolerance.[307] In France, the film gathered mixed reviews. French journalist Jacques Mandlebaum wrote, 'Le film est un peu laborieux et peine à se porter à la hauteur de l'événement'.[308]

It took until the mid-1990s for Arab cinema to recognise the emigration of the Sephardic Jewish communities, who had left for Israel, France, and Canada forty years previously. Arab cinema of the 1990s began to acknowledge Jewish heritage as part of the tapestry of identities in the 'Arab' world, and to present Jewish protagonists as nationals.[309] Film scholar Malek Khouri argues that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict of the 1950s onwards influenced Arab filmmakers in the way they censored themselves: Jewishness was often equated with Zionism, and to introduce Jews as Arabs was likely to be condemned by the public and by state funding bodies – the films of the Egyptian director Youssef Chahine were a notable exception.[310] In the 1990s, Arab filmmakers were questioning the official history that equated Arabs with Muslims and ignored Jewish heritage in so-called Arab countries such as Iraq, Egypt, and Morocco.

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[307] 'Sortir. "Où vas-tu Moshé?"', *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 28 December 2007 <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourdhui/124715> [accessed 20 May 2016].
[308] Jacques Mandelbaum, '"Où vas-tu Moshé?": une comédie douce-amère sur l'exode des juifs marocains', *Le Monde*, 8 June 2010 <https://www.lemonde.fr/cinema/article/2010/06/08/ou-vas-tu-moshe-une-comedie-douce-amere-sur-l-exode-des-juifs-marocains_1369181_3476.html> [accessed 12 May 2016].I was not able to find the film's attendance in France, where it was mainly distributed in Paris cinemas and presented as part of the event *Maghreb des films*.
[309] Malek Khouri, 'Memory and the Reconciliation of Diasporas: Cinematic Trace of Arab National Identity in the Film *Forget Baghdad*', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 30.1 (2010), pp. 85-91 (86-87).
[310] Ibid.

In Morocco, home to a Sephardic Jewish population of approximately 250,000 until the 1960s (only 2200 in 2018), Moroccan films only introduced Jewish-Moroccan characters from 2005, in films such as *Marock*, *Adieu Mères* (Dir. Mohammad Ismael, 2007) and *Où vas-tu Moshé?*.[311] The appearance of these Jewish-Moroccan characters was one consequence of the changing political climate in Morocco after the 1999 accession of King Mohammed VI. The historian Daniel J. Schroeter argues that, by acknowledging the presence of Jews, the Moroccan nation presents proof of a 'more open, progressive, civil society'.[312] These films promote a secular rather than an Islamic society, in which Morocco is tolerant, cosmopolitan, and inclusive.[313] However, the film's title reflects the ambivalence of the Moroccan funding authorities towards the subject. The original title was *Mon frère le Juif*, later changed to *Mon ami le Juif*, which was not approved of; the final title takes Moshé as an everyman for all the Jews who have left Morocco.

Prior to exploring the importance of *darija* in a would-be secular (or religiously and ethnically inclusive) Moroccan national identity, I will summarise the historical events on which the film is based, to better comprehend the film's context. Jews lived in Morocco before the arrival of Islam, having arrived in North Africa around the time of the founding of Carthage in 813 BC.[314] After the Arab conquests of Morocco, and the establishment of the Sherifian monarchy in the

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[311] Emanuela Trevisan Semi, 'Double Trauma and Manifold Narratives: Jews' and Muslims' Representations of the Departure of Moroccan Jews in the 1950s and 1960s', *Journal Of Modern Jewish Studies*, 9.1 (2010), 107-125 (pp. 108-109). Kamil Haj-Hamou, 'Où sont donc passés les juifs du Maroc?', *HuffPost*, 14 February 2018 <https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/kamil-hajhamou/mais-ou-sont-donc-passes-les-juifs-du-maroc_b_19229608.htm>l [accessed 28 March 2018].
[312] Schroeter, p. 147.
[313] Oren Kosansky and Aomar Boum, 'The "Jewish Question" in Postcolonial Moroccan Cinema', *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 44.3 (2012), 421-442 (p. 422).
[314] Richard Gunther, 'Morocco's Last Jews', *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought*, 46.4 (1997), 489-492 (p. 489).

Eighth Century, Jews were granted the status of *dhimmis*, whereby they paid tax to be granted protection.[315] In Algeria, Jews were granted French citizenship by the Crémieux decree in 1870, which marked the shift of Algerian Jews from the side of the 'indigène' (Muslim) to the European. However, the French protectorate that began in 1912 did not grant a special status to Jews, who remained subject to Rabbinic and Muslim Moroccan courts.[316]

Moroccan Jews spoke *darija*, Berber languages, French, or Haketia – a variety of Spanish that borrows from Judeo-Moroccan Arabic – but were not fluent in Standard Arabic or Arabic writing, unlike Jews in the Middle East.[317] By the time of Morocco's independence in 1956, the new Constitution formally made Jews and Muslims equal citizens. One of the political aims of Arabisation was to assimilate Jews into the postcolonial Moroccan nation. With the creation of Israel in 1948, however, and the onset of the Egyptian-Israeli conflict in 1956, few Jews held much hope for their future in Morocco and began preparing to depart for Israel. Helped by Zionist associations, the departure occurred in three waves: 1948, after the creation of Israel; 1957 to 1961, when Jewish emigration from newly-independent Morocco was illegal, until a ship smuggling forty-three Moroccan Jews sank in 1961 and sharpened national and international focus on their plight; and 1961 to 1964, when the film's events take place.[318] In the latter period, Moroccan authorities facilitated their travel by granting collective passports and de facto agreed to their departure from Morocco.[319]

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[315] Koansky and Boum, 'The "Jewish Question" in Postcolonial Moroccan Cinema', p. 422.
[316] Peter Drucker, '"Disengaging from the Muslim Spirit": The Alliance Israélite Universelle and Moroccan Jews', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 11.1 (2015), 3-23 (p. 16).
[317] Ibid.
[318] Trevisan Semi, 'Double Trauma and Manifold Narratives: Jews' and Muslims' Representations of the Departure of Moroccan Jews in the 1950s and 1960s', pp. 108-109.
[319] Drucker, '"Disengaging from the Muslim Spirit": The Alliance Israélite Universelle and Moroccan Jews', p. 3.

Although Shlomo is deeply involved in Moroccan culture – playing traditional Muslim and Jewish music in the local group and mixing with Muslims – he speaks *darija* with a discernible accent. His pronunciation of certain letters (s, q, h) diverges from the pronunciation of Muslim characters in the film. To some extent, then, language, and the way that it differentiates Jews and Muslims, serves to cast Moroccan Jews in the film as 'others'. Shlomo is also subject to the self-interest of Moroccan Muslims, who want him to remain so that the bar can remain open. Shlomo's status vaguely alludes to *dhimmi*: protected, but with restricted freedom.

Shlomo only speaks *darija* and is not involved in the political discussions at the bar between Muslim Moroccans who mix French with *darija*. Shlomo's distance from political affairs is visually emphasised: he is an active member of the musical group, but he never engages in these discussions with the educated Moroccan Muslims in the bar. When Shlomo plays with his group at a private celebration, another group of men are assembled around a table to eat. The distance between Shlomo and these men is emphasised by the camera's movement, panning from left to right. The seated men are distinguished by their costumes: dark suits, as opposed to the traditional *jellaba* that Shlomo wears.

Figure 9. Shlomo (on the right) playing *oud* in traditional Moroccan outfit

As the educated middle-class men of the village debate the political and economic implications of the Jews' departure from Morocco, they talk in French: the language, in this film, of post-independence political consciousness – not the language of a colonial legacy as found elsewhere. A doctor in the group argues in favour of the role that Jews play in Moroccan society. He is trying to influence the councillors who are present, but because the councillors do not speak French, he must turn to *darija* to lend any authority to his argument that Jews are Moroccans.

The councillors, in turn, conceal their happiness that the Jews are leaving the area. They maintain that their only concern is the closure of the bar, even though that event is associated with the departure of all non-Muslims. The deeper aim of the council, beyond closing the bar, is to eradicate the colonial legacy that it represents. One of the councillors calls for Arabic to replace French entirely, because colonial times have passed. The sequence cuts to a medium close-up of the man's face as he says 'Bismillah' ('in the name of Allah'). This religious invocation combines with the feast that is taking place to clearly indicate are the rightful guardians of a post-independence Moroccan identity: they are Muslim men.

French, in the pan-Arab consciousness of the councillors, is not neutral. It is the language of the law that allows the bar to stay open and remains the language of the coloniser. In the village, this colonial hangover is represented by Pierre, the bar owner. Pierre is dying, a symbol of the end of the colonial era. Discussions between Pierre and Zina, his maid and caretaker, reveal the impossibility of communication between the master (the coloniser), and the servant (the colonised). Pierre has not learnt *darija* and Zina does not speak French. Still, Zina, filmed in close-up, reminisces in *darija* about her years of service with Pierre. He replies, in French, that she will not be forgotten in his will. This is a promise that Pierre does not keep. Even

in a post-colonial context, language alienates Zina, on two levels. When Pierre's will is revealed, Zina has been excluded in favour of his family: another colonial lie. Zina visits the lawyer, who is Muslim. In French, however, he refuses to see her. The colonial legacy is thus still felt in post-colonial Morocco.

If French is the language of colonialism, then Standard Arabic is here the language of Islam. Standard Arabic is not encountered in everyday life in the film and is only represented in a scene in the mosque during Friday's service. The camera work emphasises the power of this language in this religious context. The camera pans across the assembly from behind, in a medium shot, framing the preacher, the *Imam*. The camera then focuses on the tiles of the mosque. In not showing the *Imam*, the film draws attention to the content of his sermon. Mustapha (the bar owner) enters the mosque and becomes the camera's focus just as the *Imam* discusses alcohol prohibition. The camera shows how the congregation turns to look at Mustapha, judging him. A medium shot isolates him as the *Imam* continues, his words loud and clearly enunciated. This religious speech clearly strengthens the collective will of the councillors to act against religious 'deviance', and the bar becomes an issue that is moral, religious, and political.

When the council addresses Mustapha after Friday's sermon, they are shot from the opposite sides of a round table. Thus, Mustapha is isolated and separated from the group. He wears traditional clothes, as he wore in the mosque, while they wear suits. Here, both parties speak *darija*, but in this instance *darija* does not unite them. To defend himself, Mustapha produces a printed copy of the law, originally created in colonial time, in French. As such, the French language of the document intervenes into the debate, even though neither side sees French as the main vehicle of their identity nor speaks it fluently. French becomes the mediating language, a

moderating but not unifying presence. It is the dispassionate language of law, but a verdict beyond religious law: the bar must remain open so long as a non-Muslim lives in the village.

Meanwhile, most Jews have left the village anyway. They have even left Morocco and made it to Israel. Paradoxically, the most positive association of Jewishness with Moroccan national identity comes about once the Jewish community has arrived in Israel. They live on a kibbutz and are welcomed by the Israeli Jews. Because the Moroccan Jews have needed to learn Hebrew, their language would appear to be one of the first elements of their Moroccan identity to be lost. However, the migrant community is shown dancing to Moroccan music and clinging onto *darija*. In this way, the Moroccan Jews resist Israel's 'de-Arabisation' policies, promoted by the Israeli government to integrate Sephardic Jews. Shohat describes how these Israeli policies aimed to 'save' the Jews from their Arab backgrounds and free them from the 'harsh rule of their Arab captors'.[320] Israeli films of the 1960s that portrayed the Sephardi community were known as 'borekas movies' – alluding to a Moroccan pastry.[321] These were poor quality productions that ridiculed the Sephardic community, and Shohat describes the boreka films as the cultural equivalent of the de-Arabisation project.[322] Unlike the boreka films, *Où vas-tu Moshé?* insists on a positive 'Moroccan-ness' of the Jews. The film suggests that their Moroccan identity and language will not be forgotten.

A later scene shows a group of young Moroccan Jewish men waiting in a queue at an unemployment centre in Israel. Realising their dismal prospects, they begin to protest, chanting in *darija*. The men wave the Moroccan flag, and hold a

[320] Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 103.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid.

picture of Mohammed V, Morocco's king until his death in 1961, described in the voiceover by Shlomo's daughter Rachel, in French, as the Jews' protector because he prevented Moroccan Jews from being deported when the country was under Vichy rule. On the Israeli street, there is a clear display of the symbols of Moroccan nationhood: the nation, by way of the flag; the king's power, represented by his image; and the use of *darija* as their language.

The likelihood of the scene outside the employment centre – Moroccan Jews fleeing Morocco, travelling with flags and carrying the picture of Mohammed V – is doubtful. The symbolic value, however, is clear. It identifies the difficulty faced by Moroccan Jews who left Morocco but did not feel at home in Israel. Language remains an essential tool of protest, but their protest is in vain because the Israeli authorities cannot understand them when they use *darija*. However, using *darija*, and not the Hebrew that they have had to learn, is a clear enough protest, even if individual words are not understood. The scene confirms the broader message of the film that the Moroccan Jews were more at home in Morocco.

Although Shlomo has left the village, the film ends on a celebratory note: the bar remains open, and is named in French, '*Chez Mustapha*', signalling the end of Pierre's colonial legacy yet retaining the French language in a gesture of multiculturalism. This is a triumph for Mustapha. The bar, where traditional music is played and where men and women mix and dance, is a symbol of Morocco's diverse culture. It is a place where political discussions occur openly, where languages mix, and where religion is relatively unimportant. However, this image of a tolerant and multicultural Morocco – and the bar as a symbol of a protected, secular space – is not entirely convincing, because only one Jew remains, Brahem. The film ultimately

shines a light on the failure of Moroccan politics to secure a place for Jews in the nation, despite their shared cultural and linguistic heritage.

Goodbye Morocco: The Myth of Globalised Identities

After his trilogy of films set in Algiers, Moknèche turned to Tangier for his next feature, *Goodbye Morocco* (2013). Referencing the film noir genre, gradually revealing a murder through describing the events in the week that precede it, the plot follows a young Moroccan divorcee, Dounia, who wants to leave Morocco at any cost. Lubna Azabal plays this 'femme fatale' who lives with her Serbo-Croatian lover Dimitri (French-Serbian actor Radivoje Bukvic). Dounia and Dimitri work on a construction site, where Dounia manages the illegal migrants who are building a luxurious villa. When digging a tunnel, the workers discover a Christian catacomb from the fourth century, which includes a fresco of a praying woman. Dounia sees in the fresco her chance to escape from Morocco: she plans to smuggle it to Europe and sell it there, with the help of Mourad, the Tangier museum's director, and then settle in Europe with her eight-year-old son who lives with his father, and Dimitri.

Events do not go as planned. A Nigerian worker named Gabriel, who also wants to leave for Europe, is found dead on the construction site. Dounia orders her chauffeur, Ali, to dump the body into the sea. She wants to hide the incident and avoid any complications with the police. Gabriel's disappearance triggers a series of events. Most immediately, the search for Gabriel's body by his French lover Fersen reveals how poorly the death of illegal migrants is handled by the local police. Later, a second death occurs: in an act of frustration, a distraught Ali murders Dimitri because he is in love with Dounia. At the end of the film, Dounia returns to her

husband, Ali the chauffeur is imprisoned for the murders of Gabriel – now buried in a Christian cemetery – and of Dimitri, and Dimitri's coffin is sent back to Europe.

Goodbye Morocco has many transnational elements. It was funded by two national sources, state and private: it received the *avance sur recettes* of the French CNC and benefitted from a Belgian state tax deduction, amassing a budget of 2.9 million Euros.[323] The film uses Moroccan, French, and Belgian cast members and shooting locations, and multiple languages: French, *darija,* Wolof, and English. *Goodbye Morocco* was celebrated at international festivals, but this did not translate into success at the French box office. The film attracted only 26,503 viewers in France after running for 21 weeks, a fraction of the 250,000 viewers for Moknèche's earlier film *Délice Paloma* (2007).[324] *Goodbye Morocco* was not distributed in Morocco or Algeria, perhaps reflecting a lack of commercial interest from distributors. Moknèche explained that he chose Morocco this time because *Délice Paloma* had not been distributed in Algeria, which he understood as an act of censorship from the Algerian authorities, after which he has not returned to Algeria for filming. [325]

[323] 'Goodbye Morocco de Nadir Moknèche', Algeriades website <http://www.algeriades.comnadir-mokneche-%D9%86%D8% A7%D8%AF%D9% 8A%D8%B1/article/goodbye-morocco-de-nadir-mokneche> [accessed 21 March 2016].
[324] Claire Diao, 'Box-office français 2013: le bilan', *La Francophonie en images*, 23 April 2014 <http://www.imagesfrancophones.org/ficheGrosPlan.php?no=12187> [accessed 12 April 2016].
[325] Ouissem Gombra, 'Nadir Moknèche: le public ici est très sensible à mon cinéma', *Maudits Français*, 11 November 2017 <https://mauditsfrancais.ca/2017/11/11/ nadir-mokneche-le-public-ici-est-tres-sensible-a-mon-cinema/> [accessed 13 December 2017].

Figure 10. *Goodbye Morocco*'s poster (title French and Arabic) portraying Lubna Azabal

Goodbye Morocco explores the effects of globalisation on national identity through its use of different languages. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues that, in the era of globalisation, language is one means of ideological contestation and resistance, and at the same time is a bearer of national identity and ideology.[326] Following Bourdieu, I argue that while the multiplicity of languages in the film could have been proof of globalisation and transnational identities, it actually marks the limits of transnational identity and demonstrates how national identities are fixed in place or limited. A fixed or limited identity, in my argument, is one that cannot be re-invented: the individual finds it impossible to shape a new identity for his or her self through contact with other cultures.

Goodbye Morocco also illustrates the disparities of social status that become accentuated through globalisation and suggests that the multiplicity of languages does not – contrary to what one might expect – facilitate border-crossing or cultural

[326] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson, ed. by John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Polity in association with Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 11.

exchange between different groups (namely, the migrants, the Moroccans, and the expatriates). Because of the many different languages spoken by different groups, the characters remain unable to communicate with groups that speak a different language from their own. They remain limited to their own group, their own language, and their own identity. Language, as I will demonstrate through close analysis of specific scenes, comes to highlight the tensions between the different identities and groups.

Alongside its transnational interests, *Goodbye Morocco* is deeply concerned with Moroccan national identity and its place in a globalised world. Higbee and Lim have called for a critical approach to transnational cinema that would not oppose 'national' to 'transnational': the former, they argue, can incorporate aspects of the latter.[327] Higbee and Lim also argue for an approach to film criticism that does not reproduce Western ethnocentric views, but instead considers cultural and linguistic differences around the world. Using Higbee and Lim's ideas, I suggest that *Goodbye Morocco* uses an identifiably Moroccan narrative to challenge and question Moroccan identity.

The 'Moroccan-ness' of the film is mostly manifest in its location, Tangier, its selection of Moroccan actors (Ali is played by director and actor Faouzi Bensaïdi), and its use of *darija* – this is Moknèche's first film in *darija*, rather than French. The plot focuses on issues pertinent to Morocco: the plight of Dounia as she tries to affirm her independence and identity in a patriarchal society; the same-sex relationship between Gabriel and Fersen, a taboo subject rarely explored on screen in

[327] Higbee and Lim, 'Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies', p. 10.

the Maghreb; and the image of Europe as a place of individual freedoms, but also a place to which the characters fail to escape.

The location, Tangier, is reminiscent of film noir. In various American and French noirs, Tangier has long been a city of danger and intrigue. Film noir emerged in Hollywood after the Second World War and differed from mainstream Hollywood films of the period by articulating the anxieties of men who returned from war and were met with unemployment, disillusion, and alienation.[328] In *Goodbye Morocco*, film noir provides an aesthetic and a mood, to connote the hopelessness of the film's subjects. Noirs tend to explore the tensions, moral conflicts, and ethical dilemmas that fracture identity; Moknèche uses elements of film noir in *Goodbye Morocco* to achieve the same effect.

Although realistic elements are present in the film, *Goodbye Morocco* uses various codes of film noir: the non-chronological narrative construction, the presentation of Dounia as a femme fatale, the dim lighting and disquieting music. The film plays with narrative shifts, gradually revealing a murder mystery by way of flashbacks. The music is composed by Pierre Bastaroli, who also collaborated with Moknèche on *Viva Laldjérie*. Bastaroli's music helps to create the film's dark and unsettling mood and adds dramatic effects such as suspense and gloom. Moknèche explains that French cinematographer Hélène Louvart – well known for her collaboration with international directors such as Wim Wenders, Agnès Varda, and Claire Denis – recreated the atmosphere of film noir with the fog and dim lighting.[329] The city of Tangier, with its whitewashed streets, is hardly visible. Instead, we

[328] Janey Place, 'Women in Film Noir', in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (London: British film Institute, 1998), pp. 29-45 (p. 39).
[329] '*Goodbye Morocco* Press Kit', Les Films du Losange website <https://cdn1.filmsdulosange.com/content/uploads/sites/49/2012/06/en-presskit-5696-goodbye-morocco-2.pdf> [accessed 12 April 2016].

mostly encounter Dounia's flat – seen under a gloomy, rainy night sky – and the construction site where she and the workers spend most of their time. The site is located far from the city, facing the sea, and is filmed in long shots, stressing the remoteness of the place.

Dounia's attributes as femme fatale are partial but important: she is visually dominant, filmed in close-ups, medium shots, physically, socially and sexually free. Yet, according to the definition of film scholar Virginia Allen, who describes the femme fatale as a 'woman who lures men into danger, destruction, and even death by means of her overwhelmingly seductive charms', Dounia does not totally conform to this stereotype.[330] She is filmed at work, she is independent, she makes her own decisions and she directs men on the construction site, giving them orders. Dounia's shifting between the non-seductive working woman and the femme fatale is visually represented by her different outfits. She dresses, variously, like a 1950s actress from a Hitchcock film, an independent woman in trousers, and in traditional Moroccan costume.

Figure 11. Dounia dressed in a Hitchcockian style visiting Ali's flat

[330] Virginia M Allen, *The Femme Fatale: Erotic Icon* (Troy, NY: Whitston, 1983), p. 7.

Figure 12. Dounia dressed in a traditional Moroccan outfit outside her flat

In this film, languages construct and differentiate identities. The construction site is the starting point of my analysis because it serves as a microcosm of contemporary Moroccan society. It also illustrates the illegal immigrants' marginalisation. The construction site is at the margins of Tangier – unsafe and illegal. The workers do not have the basic right to speak or exist in the dominant culture. The immigrants have no escape from the site, which is guarded by people and dogs, and surrounded by barriers. The actors who play the workers are Senegalese, living in Tangier, who had previously tried – and failed – to reach Europe.[331] The digging of the tunnel, and the discovery of the ancient catacomb, mark the impossibility of escaping this territory: the tunnel is closed and leads nowhere. While inside the tunnel, Gabriel jokingly declares in French that it is a tunnel to Spain, a remark that reflects their shared dream of escape, and sense that the dream may be a mirage. The sea-route to Europe, is seen from the construction site and seems accessible, yet it is inaccessible for the illegal migrants and Dounia, and is shown mainly in long shot, distanced from the film's events. Tangier and the construction site remain spaces that are simultaneously open towards the sea, but also closed and guarded.

[331] '*Goodbye Morocco* Press Kit'.

French, *darija*, and Wolof, the Senegalese workers' language, are all used on the site. This diversity suggests transnational possibility, but these languages only isolate each character, defining and fixing their identities. For example, when the workers refuse to continue digging in the catacomb, arguing that they cannot dig into the tombs of the dead, their belief is met with incredulity by Dimitri, Dounia and Ali, each of whom responds in his or her own language. When they refuse to continue digging, the workers are prompted to discuss their pay as well as their beliefs. But when they speak, they are not given subtitles, which renders them incomprehensible to most audience members, just as they are to most of the film's main characters. Moknèche places the workers' chief alongside Dounia, emphasising her distance from the workers physically as well as linguistically. She threatens to replace them with Moroccan workers.

The illegal migrants are given no independence or autonomy. Moknèche emphasises the loss of individuality of the workers by showing them grouped together, almost indistinguishable from one another. Thus, the illegal immigrants remain illegal immigrants, unable to shake that identity, subordinated to the dominant cultural group. Ali accentuates the workers' linguistic marginalisation by commenting on Gabriel's disappearance in *darija*, a language they do not understand. Ali declares that Gabriel was a homosexual ('*morricone*'), and in revealing Gabriel's sexuality, Ali culturally distances himself from the workers: he implies that they share Gabriel's morals and approve of his sexuality. By using *darija*, Ali denies any possibility for the workers to respond to this intimation. Cultural exchange appears impossible.

Moknèche associates Ali with small spaces from which he cannot escape: his small apartment, the car where he spends his days, and the prison cell where he will

end up. Ali, too, is confined to his social status: he is the son of a maid; Dounia's chauffeur. There is no social escape for Ali, and language does not help him to assert himself. In one scene, Ali gazes at the poster of *Parle avec elle* (Dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 2002). On the poster, the woman's closed lips appear to almost touch Ali's closed lips as he is filmed in profile, which emphasises his inability to talk and provides an ironic juxtaposition with the title of Almodóvar's film.

Figure 13. Ali at the construction site

Ali finds expression in listening to music – specifically, rai music by Chebba Djennet, romantic songs that reflect his love for Dounia. Despite sharing the same language as Dounia, Ali goes unheard by her. In fact, Dounia dismisses him, labelling him as being 'less than a black guy.' The racism of the comment demonstrates how Dounia perceives identity as something to be fixed and classified. Ali's identity is denied by Dounia. His eventual killing of Dimitri only serves as a futile gesture towards re-establishing his sense of self.

Dounia herself is at the crossroads of different identities. At the construction site, she dictates her orders; outside, she is subjected to Moroccan law. Divorced, she cannot obtain the custody of her son and lives unmarried with a non-Muslim. Dounia's social transgressions are expressed visually as she is filmed naked, despite the fact that nudity is a taboo subject in Algerian and Moroccan films. Dounia's use

of language allows her to cross multiple social identities: she uses *darija* with her son and her mother; she uses French and *darija* at home; yet with her lover she only speaks French. However, language cannot help her to escape Moroccan laws against inter-faith relationships, nor gain custody of her son.

While the illegal immigrants are denied any identity, Dimitri, a legal immigrant, has actively chosen Morocco as his new home. He is from Yugoslavia and has experienced the trauma of the Yugoslav Wars that started in 1991. With the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav federation was divided along different boundaries: political, ethnic, religious, and linguistic. With the proclamation of independent states on the territory of former Yugoslavia, each state claimed its own official language. Dimitri mentions that his identity is complicated because he has a Croatian mother and a Serbian father. Life in Tangier, and being able to speak French, help him to build a new identity in Morocco, and he does not want to leave. Dimitri's family name, Barberoussa (the name of a Turkish pirate in the 16th century who seized Algiers in 1529 and made it the centre of Mediterranean piracy), links him to the Mediterranean, and demonstrates how Morocco is home to many exiles. Language in this instance offers a means to distance oneself from an identity that has been traumatised.

Dimitri as well as Fersen, Gabriel's lover, could be described as cosmopolitans, the 'set of privileged subsets of citizens […] who have the resources necessary to travel, learn other languages, and absorb other cultures'.[332] However, cosmopolitanism remains an illusion: neither Fersen nor Dimitri have learnt the language of their chosen country, and they live detached from Morocco's realities.

[332] Umut Özkirimli, *Contemporary Debates on Nationalism: A Critical Engagement* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 144.

Although Tangier encompasses different nationalities, it is no longer the cosmopolitan city it was in the past. A singer at a bar performs 'Blue Gardenia', the song performed by Nat King Cole in the film noir, *The Blue Gardenia* (Dir. Fritz Lang, 1953). The singer sings in French, a signifier of cosmopolitan identity, used in this instance only to present a romantic image for the tourists gathered in the bar, drinking champagne. The scene presents Tangier as faded, a city of the past. It is cosmopolitan only for the privileged classes: Ali, the Moroccan chauffeur who hardly speaks French, is kept outside, at a distance.

French, when not spoken by foreigners, is the language used to reconnect Morocco to its pre-Islamic past. After the fresco is discovered, the museum director Mourad traces the ancient Christian route into Morocco on a map. We see his finger move in extreme close-up. The map is in French, and the names of the cities that Mourad inspects emphasise Morocco's Roman history: Volubilis, Laxus (Larache), Tinguis (Tangier). The map also shows the physical proximity of Tangier to Europe. To highlight the Christian and pre-Arabic history of the Maghreb is a common feature of Moknèche's films, *Délice Paloma* for example draws on Algeria's Roman heritage and historical sites. In so doing, Moknèche contests the definition of Moroccan identity as solely Arab and Muslim and insists on the cosmopolitanism of Algerians and Moroccans. Moknèche takes the opportunity to recall Tangier's pre-Islamic past and its proximity to Europe to blur any singular national identity.

English, on the other hand, is presented as the 'other' language, spoken by very few characters. It is present in the film's title, where it brings a sense of movement and travel. The English title inscribes the film into the era of transnationalism and globalisation by stating what many of the characters want to do: say goodbye to Morocco. As the only English-speaking worker, the Nigerian

Gabriel is singled out from the other workers through language and sexuality. Although Gabriel speaks his own language, thus affirming his Nigerian identity, he also understands French, and clings to English as part of his identity.

On account of his desire to migrate to Europe, Gabriel steals a skull from the construction site, to sell to a smuggler. The smuggler, contrary to media images of smugglers as bandits, is a distinguished Moroccan man in a car, who can speak fluent English. Played by Moknèche, the smuggler displays signifiers of globalisation: he eats Chinese food, drinks wine, and drives a high-end car. The car represents the smuggler's mobility. He rejects the skull, which indicates his connection to modernity rather than history.

In scenes such as Gabriel's exchange with the smuggler, English is used as the language of commerce. Paul Narukans explains how in the era of globalisation English flows like transnational capital, seeming to belong to everyone and no one.[333] English is separated from the national setting.[334] The same scene could be filmed anywhere in Africa, emphasising the transnational aspect of the English language, and marking the importance of English in Francophone countries, as well as the shifting power between French and English in Morocco.

Although *darija*, French, and English are used throughout the film, Standard Arabic remains the language of news and authority – used, for example, at the museum. After the Moroccan authorities recover the museum pieces, the museum director resumes his official function, disguising his role in the smuggling plot. He asserts in a television interview that he will ensure that Moroccan historical objects will stay in Morocco. A medium close-up of his serious expression conveys his

[333] Paul J. Narkunas, 'Capital Flows Through Language: Market English, Biopower, and the World Bank', *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 52.108 (2005), 28-55 (p. 29).
[334] Ibid.

resolve as he uses Standard Arabic for his nationalistic speech. Standard Arabic is thus associated with both nationalism and corruption. It is the language of arrogance and authority; and the language of lies, through which the Moroccan authorities can readjust reality.

Goodbye Morocco offers a bleak image of the future for the illegal immigrants, Dounia and Ali. Gabriel is left dead, buried by his lover Fersen. Language (or its absence) delineates their different identities and draws attention to each of the characters' plights: the migrants' sense of exclusion; Dounia's sense of internal exile; Ali's inability to express himself. The film contests the notion of a borderless world where identities are easily mixed. None of the languages in the film offers a new identity to the characters. Instead, each language marks difference and fixes identity.

Conclusion

The four films examined are transnational in terms of funding, production, cast, and directors. Yet all these films enter into a dialogue about national identity and national cinema and do so by using different languages. The films examine the process through which cultural, religious, linguistic practices are defined, contested, or remembered. These films ask how the national is to be understood within transnational cinema, often by interrogating the notion of the nation itself.

Viva Laldjérie presents an Algerian identity comfortable with French, but the film's reception demonstrated the expectations of the public and the press about which language is appropriate for Algerian films. The polemic about the use of French reveals the still vivid debates in Algeria about the place of colonial language in the independent nation; that French was so often used to discuss taboo subjects

further challenges the 'image' of that nation. In contrast, *Marock* was not criticised for its use of French; the critical focus was on the disrespect of religion.

Marock's characters are upper class, so it may have been more acceptable than in *Viva Laldjérie* that they spoke French. This contrast also reveals that the post-colonial relations between France and Morocco are not perceived to be as difficult as between France and Algeria. *Marock* attempts to construct a new identity for Jews and Muslims in Morocco. Paradoxically, *Marock* became inscribed in Moroccan cinema history due to its use of the French language as a unifier. The film implies that the co-existence of Jews and Muslims in Morocco is possible, and this will be facilitated by the French language – that is, the language of a secular country. *Où vas-tu Moshé?* too focuses on the presence of Jews and their contribution to Moroccan cultural identity. However, the film also highlights how Jews were considered as 'others' after Morocco's independence. Sharing the same language and culture as Muslim Moroccans did not prevent Moroccan Jews from emigrating from Morocco. Religious differences were more powerful than cultural identity in defining Moroccan-ness.

In reproducing the multiplicity of languages that are spoken in Morocco, *Goodbye Morocco* serves as a Moroccan film. However, what is important is not to classify it, but to point to the impact of any such classification. In *Goodbye Morocco*, Moknèche transposes issues tackled in his Algerian films to Moroccan life and offers a subjective experience of Moroccan identity. The film was not distributed in Morocco, perhaps a result of its exploration of taboo subjects. The reception of *Viva Laldjérie*, too, shows that open sexuality and female nudity were taken as an 'attack' on the nation's image. The fact that the film was not distributed in Morocco, or even considered as Moroccan, reveals the expectations of

'Moroccan' films by the public and by film critics. The multiplicity of languages seems at first to offer an opportunity to represent a multiplicity of identities. However, the languages do not change the identity of the characters – ultimately, they confirm how difficult it is to escape one's identity in Morocco in the globalised era.

Chapter Three: At the Intersection of Religion and Politics in Everyday Life

This chapter explores the relation between violence, language, politics and religion in a selection of Algerian and Moroccan films which span over ten years – from 2002 to 2012. I will first discuss three Algerian features that bear witness to the Black Decade: *Rachida*, *Barakat!*, and *Morituri*. *Rachida* and *Barakat!* illustrate how language empowered women to overcome and resist violence, while *Morituri* constructs a more subjective narrative and suggests that the Black Decade was, in fact, the work of a political and financial mafia. The second focus of the chapter is on themes common to Algerian and Moroccan films: the despair of a youthful population, in *Casanegra* and *Roma ouella n'touma,* the rise of religious extremism, in Nabil Ayouch's 2012 *Les Chevaux de Dieu*, and the return of the terrorists into civil society after the Black Decade in *Le Repenti*. The chapter's final focus will be religious discourse in everyday life, as encountered in two contrasting Moroccan films: *Islamour* and *Amours voilées*.

Algeria's Black Decade: Resisting Everyday Violence

'Today's Lesson'…*Rachida*: The Teacher Speaks

Rachida is Yamina Bachir Chouikh's first feature – which she wrote, directed, and edited. The story is inspired by a real-life event: the death in the Algiers Casbah of a teacher, Zakia G uessab, assassinated after she refused to place a bomb in her

school.[335] The protagonist of the film, the eponymous Rachida, based on Guessab, lives in a working-class area of Algiers with her divorced mother Aïcha. When Rachida refuses to place the bomb, she is shot by one of her former students, and left for dead on the street. To recover from her trauma, and hide from terrorists, she moves to a remote village, where she ends up teaching. At the village, the plot intertwines the narratives of several characters: Khaled a young man is in love with a young woman called Hadjar and who he desperately calls everyday form the public booth, Karima, a little girl who dreams of going to the moon, Zhora who was abducted by terrorists, raped and who returns to the village pregnant and traumatised. At Hadjar's wedding, Rachida experiences another terrorist attack, when the party is raided, villagers murdered, women kidnapped, and houses destroyed. Defiant, she returns to her school in the village the day after the attack, amidst the damages around her with her pupils walking behind her.

By the end of the film, Rachida has gained political consciousness and is empowered. She does not fear violence. *Darija* is the language which allows her to negotiate her way out of violence and trauma and assert herself. The linguist Abdulkafi Albirini, discussing the daily use of Standard Arabic, argues that it is the language that brings 'seriousness and importance to a topic', whereas *darija* he argues, is the language that is 'used for narration and giving concrete examples'.[336] However, Rachida reverses Albirini's statement and uses *darija* to state her opinions and discuss political matters.

[335] During the Black Decade the Casbah of Algiers was the place of many terrorist attacks but also the place where Islamists often hid. This is reminiscent of the anti-colonial struggle when the combatants hid in the Casbah, especially during the Battle of Algiers.
[336] Abdulkafi Albirini, 'The Sociolinguistic Functions of Codeswitching Between Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic', *Language in Society*, 40.5 (2011), 537–562 (p. 539).

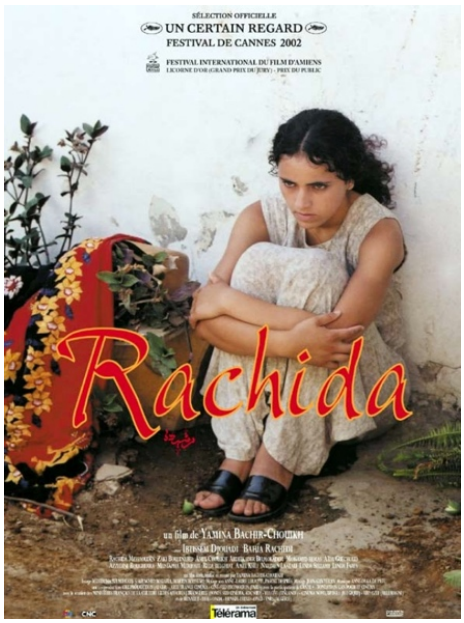

Figure 14. *Rachida*'s poster

Standard Arabic and French are exceptions in the film, used only occasionally. Standard Arabic as the official school language, is hardly spoken by Rachida, even though she masters it. French too is rarely spoken, yet when spoken it seems to belong to a 'normal' way of speech to distinguish the urban educated women and it benefits from a more positive representation than Standard Arabic. Music and silence are also important in the film in representing Rachida's inner journey and transformation. Diegetic and non-diegetic music accompanies her in overcoming her fear, while silence heightens the tragedy of the events in moments when language is hopeless.

Before directing, Bachir Chouikh (born in 1954) edited all her husband's films, Mohammed Chouikh, and was also a script writer for known Algerian directors (Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina for *Vent de Sable* (1982), and on Allouache's *Omar Gatlato*). Bachir Chouikh studied in the short-lived Algerian institution *Le Centre National du Film Algérien* in 1973. *Rachida* is a medium-budget film of only 900,000 euros, Bachir-Chouikh struggled to arrange financing,

which she spent five years gathering.[337] Eventually, the film was funded largely by the French-German television company Arte, the Gan Insurance foundation, and the Algerian Ministry of Culture and Communication. Bachir Chouikh ensured that the same script was presented to the Algerian committee for funding and to foreign funding bodies – which is to say that the script was neither censored nor modified to conform to particular funders' expectations.[338]

Rachida received national and international attention and circulated in film festivals such as *Un Certain regard* at Cannes and won the Satyajit Ray award at the *London Film Festival* in 2002. The film was released in 2002, in France and Algeria, where it attracted audiences of 125,000 and 60,000 respectively.[339] The latter is quite high, given that only six cinemas were open in Algeria in 2002.[340] Bachir Chouikh said that Algerian audiences were moved, some to tears, by *Rachida* because it described events they had lived through, something that had not happened since *La Bataille d'Alger*.[341]

The film stresses the plight of the population living in fear during the Black Decade, the economic hardship of unemployed youth, and the harsh conditions of living with scenes describing the shortage of water in Algiers. With the exception of the attack on Rachida by the young men, however, violence is only implied in the film. Bachir Chouikh uses different filmic strategies to convey it without fully

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[337] Christophe Carrière, 'Pour l'honneur de l'Algérie', *L'Express*, 2 January 2003 <https://www.lexpress.fr/informations/pour-l-honneur-de-l-algerie_650404.html> [accessed 12 November 2016].
[338] Amin Farzanefar, 'Interview with Yamina Bachir Chouikh. No Freedom of Expression without Funds', *Qantara*, 1 February 2005 <https://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-yamina-bachir-chouikh-no-freedom-of-expression-without-funds> [accessed 14 December 2015].
[339] Boudjemaâ Karèche, 'Chouchou, Rachida et nous', *Le Matin*, 7 August 2003.
[340] Sahbi, 'Algérie: un cinéma sans cinémas est-il possible ?'.
[341] Farzanefar, 'Interview with Yamina Bachir Chouikh. No Freedom of Expression without Funds'.

displaying the horror: *faux-barrages* – checkpoints organised by terrorists where people are killed– are filmed from afar; automatic weapons are heard in the night by children, who are so familiar with the sound that they can identify the model; and dead bodies are lined up, covered, after the attacks. When the terrorists visit the village, to ransom the villagers, they are dressed in Western clothes, and close-ups of their eyes and of the weapons enhance the danger they represent to the community.

Rachida was shot on location in Algiers and its suburbs. The film uses mainly natural light, often handheld camera, and abrupt jump cuts intended to allow the development of other narratives. Non-diegetic music heightens the fear and emotions of the characters. Many of the village actors are non-professionals, Rachida is played by Ibtissam Djouadi who was studying at the *Institut des Arts Dramatiques* in Algeria and Rachida is her first cinematic role. Only Rachida's mother, Aïcha, is a well-known television actress (Bahia Rachedi).

Rachida is first introduced to the viewer in the opening scene with a close-up of a woman's hands opening a red lipstick. The camera moves up to lips on to which the lipstick is applied. The following close-up reveals a woman's hand untying brown curly hair. The camera then placed behind the woman reveals a young woman. Rachida is getting ready to take a picture with her classroom, while some of her other colleagues, who are veiled, refuse to be photographed, as their husbands do not allow it. A later scene shows Rachida walking to the school wearing headphones and listening to Rai music. These scenes establish her independence and free spirit as she does not give in to the ambient fear. During the Black Decade, many female

teachers in Algiers and its suburbs were threatened with death by Islamic groups and asked to wear the veil. [342]

While Standard Arabic is the school's official language, Rachida resists employing it when addressing her new class in the village and she favours *darija* to convey her ideas. Standard Arabic, on the other hand, is the language used between Rachida and the school's headmaster when they first meet. In the headmaster's office, a blackboard with Arabic writing and a religious inscription: بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم 'Bismillah Arrahman Arrahim' ('In the name of God, the most Gracious, the most Merciful') confirms the presence of religion at school and that Standard Arabic is used for education and religious purposes. The headmaster is filmed in a medium shot approaching Rachida as he tries to touch her shoulder and gets physically close to her; and his lascivious behaviour undermines the religious associations.

When the headmaster introduces Rachida, he uses Standard Arabic to warn the children that they will be punished if Rachida is given cause to complain about them. Nonetheless, when Rachida meets her pupils, she writes her name on her blackboard in both French and Arabic, signalling to the pupils and to the viewer her willingness to recognise French and resist monolingualism. Rachida then proceeds in *darija*. When asked by her pupils whether Algiers really is the 'white city' (as it is known in Arabic, الجزائر البيضاء; and in French, *Alger la Blanche* [the name given to Algiers for the white colour of the buildings of the Casbah]), she replies – presumably thinking of the association of whiteness with purity – that a country or a city will be white the day the people can live freely, fearlessly, and with dignity. Rachida addresses her pupils dynamically in *darija*; the camera follows her as she

[342] Susan Slyomovics, '"Hassiba Ben Bouali, if You Could See Our Algeria": Women and Public Space in Algeria', *Middle East Report*, 192 (1995), 8-13 (p. 10).

moves and talks. A long shot embraces the classroom, and she is filmed from behind, focusing the audience's attention on the rapt expression of the pupils as they listen to her. The camera movement combined with *darija* enhances the feeling of intimate dialogue: she is sharing her thoughts and physically moves as she imparts her ideas. When the camera stops, Rachida resumes her activity as a teacher and begins to call the pupils by their names.

Rachida's use of *darija* is gendered: the association of Standard Arabic with punishment and masculine authority contrasts with the way in which Rachida addresses her pupils and invites them to ask questions; and when Rachida speaks *darija* at school she becomes associated with a gentler, more sympathetic approach to education. *Darija* also brings to the schoolroom scenes a sense of everydayness because it is the language used outside school and is the children's mother tongue. Rachida's use of *darija* therefore creates proximity not only with the pupils but also with the Algerian audience. A later scene emphasises the bond Rachida has created with her pupils. In a dream-like scene, filmed in silence with only non-diegetic music, smiling children blow soap bubbles as Rachida watches and smiles. This suspended moment marks her regained innocence and hopefulness in her village retreat.

Although Rachida prefers *darija* for the classroom, she is nonetheless proficient in Standard Arabic and Quranic verses. A scene with a female colleague demonstrates both Rachida's mastery of religious discourse and her rejection of Islamist ideology. Rachida is sitting and the other teacher is filmed approaching Rachida and kneeling to face Rachida. A medium reverse-shot adds intensity to their discussion. The teacher asks Rachida in *darija* whether she is married. A close-up enhances the severe expression of the teacher as she asks, 'Why don't you wear the

hijab [the veil]?' Rachida replies humorously that the doctor did not recommend it. The teacher is outraged that Rachida gives a doctor more authority than God and replies, 'Why is the doctor better than God who asked us to veil?'. Rachida replies with a Quranic verse: وَأَنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ('God is Merciful'). The teacher comes back with, شديد العقاب ('Severe are His punishments'), to which Rachida responds, شديد العقاب لمن أشرك به ('Severe only to those who substitute themselves for Him'). This exchange draws on the Quranic Surat *Al Maeda* verse 98, and signals the double interpretations made possible when verses are taken out of context. When Rachida invokes mercy, the teacher only sees punishment. The use of *darija* in their conversation gives a 'natural' turn to the discussion, though one that is nonetheless ideologically charged. However, when her colleague's use of *darija* fails to achieve the desired effect on Rachida, and when the former attempts to assert superiority by quoting religious verses in Classical Arabic, Rachida is conscious of the implications.

The veiling of women was a political and religious position taken by Islamic parties and, later, the armed Islamist parties: un-veiled women were associated with a lack of moral values; 'real Muslim' women had to veil themselves in order to abide by Islamic laws and protect themselves from men's gazes.[343] Rachida's female colleague associates marriage and veiling with good morals and the preservation of female honour. She confirms that veiling corresponds to 'modesty, obedience, sexual probity, conformity', and that all these 'qualities' are 'expressed publicly and overtly when [the veil is] worn'.[344]

The female colleague has interiorised and reproduced an Islamist discourse,

[343] Slyomovics, '"Hassiba Ben Bouali, If You Could See Our Algeria": Women and Public Space in Algeria', p. 10.
[344] Rod Skilbeck, 'The Shroud Over Algeria: Femicide, Islamism and the Hijab', *Journal of Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies*, 2.2 (1995), 43-54 (p. 43).

mixing *darija* with Standard Arabic, to pressure Rachida. The scene illustrates the ideological antagonisms between women, who may nonetheless be fellow *darija*-speaker*s* and confirms that during the Black Decade there was no clear linguistic division between representatives of opposing political ideologies. The scene was criticised by the Arabic-speaking Algerian newspaper *Al Hiwar* for illustrating Bachir Chouikh's attachment to Western values and disrespect for Algerian values.[345] The scene however was not commented upon by any of the French speaking newspapers.

Not all Rachida's colleagues have internalized Islamic precepts. Yasmina, who helps Rachida hide and arranges for her to be transferred to the village school, even brings Rachida's fiancé to meet her in Algiers. Yasmina, unveiled and older, is depicted as an independent woman who drives her own car and is not scared of terrorist attacks. In intimate conversations, Rachida and Yasmina switch from *darija* to French, and Rachida discusses her intimate thoughts and feelings in French. The two women are filmed sitting closely in medium shots, in Rachida's room, and French is associated with feminine chatter and happiness.

Rachida not only opposes veiling, she also disputes the state's directives of pardoning and reconciliation with terrorists. Indeed, Rachida awakens into political consciousness as the film progresses and questions the terrorists' violence as well as that of the state. She rejects the project of national reconciliation, asking in *darija* 'how [is one] to forgive if those who tried to kill you did not ask for your forgiveness?'. Rachida also states in *darija* 'I am in exile in my own country', feeling alienated and imprisoned in her own country. Instead of reconciliation with

[345] 'Sourat el Maraa fi film Rachida fi dirassa similojia. Dirassat arramz. Jouz thalith', *Al Hiwar*, 19 December 2008.

terrorists, Rachida begins to recover through her relation with her caring mother, Aïcha.

Bahia Rachedi, who plays Aïcha, had appeared in many popular television series and films, presented a famous cookery programme, and was also part of the National Television Orchestra, as a singer, for thirty years.[346] The journalist Yasmine Ben named her 'la gentille maman' because she was often cast in the role of loving, devoted mother.[347] Rachedi is primarily a television star, and she conforms to James Bennett's description of the television 'personality' as someone who cultivates a 'televisual' image.[348] Bennett points to the 'authenticity and ordinariness' of the television star, which produces 'the confusion between the television personality-as-person and the televisual image'.[349] The character of Aïcha is a classic Rachedi role, which exemplifies many features of the actress's own public persona.

Figure 15. Aïcha comforting Rachida

[346] Yasmine Ben, 'Bahia Rachedi, elle fera le rituel de la omra, portera le voile et se consacrera à l'humanitaire', *Le Maghreb*, 2 July 2011 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/lemaghreb/36582> [accessed 26 May 2015].
[347] Ibid.
[348] James Bennett, 'The Television Personality System: Televisual Stardom Revisited After Film Theory', *Screen*, 49.1 (2008), 32-50 (p. 35).
[349] Ibid.

Aïcha is pious to the point that she never misses prayer, and she questions whether Islamist terrorists are Muslims. She uses humour, proverbs in *darija*, and traditional Algerian popular wisdom to reassure and comfort her daughter. *Darija* and music become the mediums through which the mother's love is communicated. Aïcha often sings popular music that would be immediately recognizable to an Algerian audience. Her songs are derived from *chaabi*, Algerian traditional popular music, and *hawzi*, soft music often characterized by lyrics that express suffering. *Hawzi* originates in northwest Algeria (Tlemcen) and is sung in its native dialect. Non-diegetically, the film also uses Algerian singers, such as Reinette l'Oranaise (1918-1998), a Jewish Algerian singer who moved to France and M'hamed Al Anka (1907-1978), the father of *chaabi* music. Aïcha also sings poems by Mustapha Toumi, (1937-2013), an activist during the Algerian war and poet and composer for Al Anka.

Rachida often listens to Cheb Hasni, framed sitting, and dressed in an interior dress, rocking her head, in a state of awe. Hasni was a popular *rai* singer assassinated during the Black Decade. Rai makes use of code switching between *darija* and French, and the songs often mix erotic content with stories of life's dissatisfactions. Rai was first banned by the Algerian state media in the 1980s, then condemned as amoral by the Islamists, however it circulated through pirate radio and cassettes. Although Rai songs had familial and chaste love songs, they also discussed the difficulties of family and marriage in strained economic circumstances.[350]

Music, therefore, allows Rachida and Aïcha to escape their present situation; it opens moments of breathing space for them, as well as emotional resonance.

[350] Hana Noor Al-Deen, 'The Evolution of Rai Music', *Journal of Black Studies*, 35.5 (2005), 597-611 (pp. 598-600).

Moreover, it aims at building on the cultural practices of Algerians who use *darija*, and who resist the political and religious discourse of fundamentalism. The choices of diegetic and non-diegetic music that refer to, or evoke *darija*, root the film in the everyday landscape and customs of Algeria. Language and music allow Rachida to overcome her fear, whereas silence is more meditative in her journey. She is often framed sitting in her room, rocking her head in silence, escaping from the rest of the world. These moments of silence are accompanied by close-ups of her face, conveying the suffering and trauma she has experienced.

Silence also brings attention to the villagers' fears. In a long shot, the village men are grouped around the body of an old man who was killed by terrorists. The men stand silent and powerless. Only the old man's wife speaks, accusing these men of inaction and helplessness. In another scene, a man kneels over a corpse, holding a baby bottle. The corpse, presumably his child, is positioned in a row of other corpses. The silent scene shows the numbers of people killed by the terrorists and reduces the village men to silent witnesses of this barbarism. Other shots of a little girl and her mother preparing bread to be extorted by terrorists are accompanied by silence. The silence emphasises their fear and helplessness.

The terrorists, too, are silent. Although the male terrorists dress in military fatigues, the one woman who accompanies them wears the veil, though she also carries a gun. Her presence suggests a link between these terrorists and Islamist armed groups. However, her veil may serve as a disguise, in which case the terrorists' unknown ideology becomes even more obscure. While the terrorists do not speak, the state officials are mostly absent, appearing only after attacks to carry bodies, the film here showing how the state fails to protect the population. This critique of the state's role was criticised by *Al Hiwar*, which also objected to the

representation of women as victims of patriarchy and of young people as marginalised and unemployed.[351] The press also contested the events depicted in the film. The journalist Yacine Idjer considered the film to bear an over-simplified, stereotyped view of the Algerian situation at the time of the events.[352] Such reviews, however, take the film too literally; its significance resides more in Rachida's journey.

Indeed, by the end of the film, Rachida is more than a symbol or an 'idea' – she is a fully formed human being. For most of the film, she is filmed through medium and long shots, with few scenes assuming her point of view. There is a distance between Rachida and the audience. Indeed, the scenes in which she appears most angry or traumatised are shot from another character's point of view. In the final scene, however, Rachida's face appears in close-up. After the terrorists have massacred the village, Rachida returns to the school, now abandoned. She writes درس اليوم 'today's lesson' in Standard Arabic on the blackboard and turns defiantly to the camera with tears in her eyes. With this gesture, she completes her symbolic journey, finding a new home – and sense of purpose – in the school. The film does not challenge linguistic policies in Algeria, but it implies that the Algerian situation will be changed by empowered women and education.

Barakat! La *mujahida*, la fille et le terroriste

Barakat! also shows women resisting the violence of the Black Decade. The protagonists Amel and Khadija, embark on a journey to find Amel's husband who

[351] 'Sourat el Maraa fi film Rachida fi dirassa similojia. Dirassat arramz. Jouz thalith'.
[352] Yacine Idjer, 'Cinémathèque: Rachida, un autre regard sur le film', *Info Soir*, 5 August 2003 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/infosoir/1751> [accessed 27 May 2015].

has disappeared, presumably kidnapped by an Islamic armed group. On their journey, Amel and Khadija get to know each other, and voice fears and anger in a mixture of *darija* and French. The film's use of these two unofficial Algerian languages is a clear declaration of intent. *Darija* remains the norm in Algeria and in film, and frequent use of French is an exception, particularly in the types of village in which the film takes place. The combined use of French and *darija* or code switching as defined by the socio-linguist Monica Heller, allows antagonistic ideologies to be expressed, and empowers the two women.

According to Heller, code switching is not just the use of two 'non-standard' languages but the mixing of two languages; code switching, as it becomes adopted and practised by speakers, becomes a 'normal way to talk'.[353] Furthermore, Heller highlights that code switching has social implications; it resists power by 'virtue of its place in the repertoires of individual speakers, on the one hand, and of its position with respect to other forms of language practices in circulation, on the other'.[354] In the context of monolingual nation-states (whereby one language is the official language), a case that can be applied to Algeria, Heller argues that the 'overt juxtaposition of codes is threatening, since overt practices such as code switching are doubly challenging: first, they introduce into official discourse illicit language forms; and second, they challenge the very notion of monolingualism'.[355] Code switching, performed by the women and the Islamic terrorists in the film, points to the characters' estrangement from official language, Standard Arabic.

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[353] Monica Heller, *Codeswitching: Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Perspectives* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1988), p. 8.
[354] Ibid., p. 160.
[355] Heller, 'Language Choice, Social Institutions, and Symbolic Domination', *Language in Society*, 24.3 (1995), 373-405 (p. 374).

Barakat! recounts the journey of Amel as she searches for her kidnapped husband Mourad. She is a doctor who lives on the outskirts of Algiers, by the coast. Discussions at the hospital indicate that her husband has written a controversial article on Islamic terrorists. Mourad has not returned home since, so Amel embarks on her journey with the nurse Khadija after her neighbour, a mechanic, has indicated that Mourad is to be found in the nearby *maquis*. A former *mujahida*, that is, one of the women who took part in the Algerian liberation movement against French colonial power (1954-1962) , Khadija takes with her a gun and a *haïk* – a traditional white outfit that covers a woman's head and body. Both Amel and Khadija set out walking into the *maquis* but are soon kidnapped by terrorists. At the terrorists' camp, Khadija recognizes Hadj Slimane a *mujahid* whose life she saved by nursing him after an attack by the French in which he was severely wounded. Hadj Slimane became pious: *hadj* is the name given to those who have accomplished a pilgrimage to Mecca, the fifth pillar of Islam. After the terrorists release Amel and Khadija, but have taken the car keys and their shoes, the women continue walking barefoot until they encounter an old man living alone in an isolated house; he gives them a lift home on his horse-drawn carriage. On their way back to Amel's house, the two women learn of Hadj Slimane's death and find Mourad in the neighbour's garage. The neighbour, who turns out to be a terrorist, kidnapped Mourad and may have killed Hadj Slimane.

Figure 16. *Barakat!*'s poster (title in French and Arabic)

Barakat! is Djamila Sahraoui's first feature, although she has directed six documentaries. Born in 1950 in Algeria, Sahraoui studied at the French *Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques* and has lived in France since 1970. *Barakat!* is a French- Algerian co-production, funded by the Algerian television, the Franco-German Arte, and Tunisian production company Nomadis.[356] The film was shot on location in Tipaza, by the coast, seventy kilometres from Algiers. The film alternates between long shots, low angle shots, panning the scenery and still shots with the camera focussing on the face of the characters through medium shots, conveying emotional tones. Amel and Khadija's journey is punctuated with silence and music composed by the Algerian musician Alla. Amel is played by the well-known actress Rachida Brakni, and Khadija by Fettouma Bouamari.

[356] 'Barakat! by Djamila Sahraoui', Cineuropa website <https://cineuropa.org/en/film/62169/> [accessed 26 March 2016].

Barakat! was an award-winning film, circulated in international film festivals, in Berlin, at the *Festival Panafricain du Cinéma et de la Télévision de Ouagadougou* (FESPACO) where it won the best first picture. It was however less successful in France; when it was released in 2006 it sold only 12,460 tickets.[357] In Algeria it premiered to the press and in the few cinemas of Algiers; there are however no figures of the film attendance in Algeria. While Algerian television co-produced *Barakat!*, it nonetheless did not broadcast it, instead Algerians were able to watch it on Arte channel television.

The title *Barakat!* – meaning 'enough!' in *darija* – is a call to end violence. This title is closely associated with two different protest movements. One of these, *Sebaa Snine Barakat!* (Seven years are enough!), emerged soon after independence in 1962 as a response to a period of murderous political conflict.[358] The other, known simply as *Barakat*, was the protest movement led by a female doctor against the re-election of President Abdelaaziz Bouteflika in 2014. In addition, *20 Ans Barakat* is a women's association in France and Algeria that calls for the Algerian Family Code (1984) to be repealed.[359]

Upon its Algerian premiere, journalists criticised *Barakat!*'s extensive use of French (although, ironically, many published these criticisms in French journals). Idjer, for example, argued that having eighty per cent of the dialogue in French

[357] Leslie Kealhofer-Kemp, 'Leïla Bekhti, Rachida Brakni, and the new place of Maghrebi-French actresses in French cinema', *Contemporary French Civilization*, 40.1 (2015), 49-70 (p. 58).
[358] The slogan used by demonstrators in the street to end the cycle of killings between two political factions of the GPRA (Gouvernement Provisoire de la Révolution Algérienne) and the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale).
[359] Serida Lucrezia Catalano, 'Shari'a Reforms and Power Maintenance: The Cases of Family Law Reforms in Morocco and Algeria', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 15.4 (2010), 535-55 (p. 540).

damaged the authenticity of the film.[360] The journalist Hind O, writing in the Francophone newspaper *L'Expression*, argued that French funders must have imposed the use of the French language, hence a young thug in the film speaks French, which would be unlikely in reality.[361] O's comments are indicative of a bias against Algerian films produced with French funds, whereby those films are said to tarnish national cinema (as discussed in Chapter One). However, the film also includes *darija* and French subtitles where necessary, which would appear to contradict the suggestion that French funders imposed the language, while French subtitles suggest that the film was aimed at French speaking audiences. O's comments reflect the ideology of the journalists, who seemingly appeal to the criteria of 'realism' to undermine the films' use of French. Realism becomes the way in which they can comment on the film and criticise it, while what they are really expressing is an ideology of national language.

In this instance, I want to suggest that the use of French was for practical as well as for ideological reasons. Practical reasons include the fact that Rachida Brakni (Amel) does not speak enough *darija*. Brakni is a well-known French actress of Algerian descent, and a celebrity, married to former football player Eric Cantona and trained at the prestigious *Comédie Française*. Her casting may have endeared the film to funders and spectators, and she was presented with a French script, co-written by Sahraoui and Cécile Vargaftig, a French screenwriter and author.

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[360] Idjer, 'Cinéma. "Barakat" en avant-première: deux femmes chez les terroristes', *Info Soir*, 10 November 2006 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/infosoir/55698> [accessed 12 December 2015].
[361] Hind O, 'Deux femmes dans la tourmente. Projection de *Barakat!* de Djamila Sahraoui à El Mougar', *L'Expression*, 11 November 2006 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/lexpression/38812> [accessed 14 December 2015].

Sahraoui's personal and filmic trajectory also indicates why she may have chosen French for ideological reasons. The generation that experienced colonialism and independence – that is, Sahraoui's generation – learned French, and use it as an everyday language, primarily because Arabic in schools was rarely taught under French occupation, although, as Alf Andrew Heggoy and Paul J. Zingg point out, the policy was inconsistent: 'An 1898 edict made the teaching of Arabic obligatory in the native primary schools throughout Algeria, but Arabic was considered a foreign language until 1947 and was dispensed to interested students begrudgingly'. [362] The film thus reproduces Sahraoui's own use of French and may also signal her nostalgia for her time living in Algeria. She has described the use of French as a 'realistic reflection of Algerian life'.[363]

Sahraoui's previous works also demonstrate her concern with Algeria's political and social situation, including the place of French and Berber languages in Algeria's multi-lingual identity. Some of the documentaries she directed dealt with life in Algeria during and after the Black Decade: *La Moitié du ciel d'Allah* (1995), a feminist documentary about *mujahidates*, and other women resisting terrorism; *Algérie, la vie quand même* (1998), concerned with youth unemployment in a Kabyle village and containing interviews with young people in Amazigh; and *Algérie, la vie toujours* (2001), which explores life in a Kabyle village after the Black Decade.[364] Berber languages are included in *Barakat!* in the song at its opening and closing. The song's theme is treason: its story is about a woman who warms a cold snake against her chest, but the snake, once warm, bites her.[365] The

[362] Alf Andrew Heggoy and Paul J. Zingg, 'French Education in Revolutionary North Africa', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 7.4 (1976), 571-578 (p. 574).
[363] 'Interview with Djamila Sahrouai', *Barakat!* DVD release, 2008.
[364] Sahraoui's documentaries were mainly funded by French-German television Arte, and were subtitled in French, when interviews were conducted in Berber language.
[365] 'Interview with Djamila Sahrouai'.

snake, in Sahraoui's interpretation, is a symbol of domestic terrorists, and the woman a symbol of Algeria, the mother nation: an interpretation that confirms the Algerian-ness of the terrorists.

Khadija is played by the well-known Algerian actress Fettouma Bouamari (born in 1940), known as the 'muse of Algerian cinema'.[366] Her background in the Casbah has instilled in her a witty and endearing manner of speaking – just like Parisians or Cockneys are known for their distinctive uses of language. For this reason, Bouamari has often been cast as strong and self-assured characters in Algerian films. Politically committed, a former *mujahida*, Bouamari fled for France in 1994, after a death threat.[367] *Barakat!*'s cast includes Fettouma's husband, the director and actor Mohammed Bouamari, who plays Hadj Slimane. This casting might remind Algerian viewers of *Le Charbonnier* (discussed briefly in Chapter One), in which Bouamari, living in a patriarchal rural environment, resists her husband's authority and seeks emancipation through work.

In *Barakat!*, Khadija personifies the figure of the *mujahida*. She acted boldly during the Algerian war, but she also resists violence and Islamic ideology during the Black Decade, and fiercely denounces religious hypocrisy. Khadjia carries a gun and fearlessly accompanies Amel on her journey. She bears a striking physical resemblance to Sahraoui: perhaps the character is the director's alter ego. The film positions her *mujahida* figure as the opposite of Hadj Slimane's *mujahid*-turned-terrorist. The latter leads the terrorist group that hides in the *maquis*, the mountainous wilderness, just as the *mujahidin* hid in the *maquis* during the Algerian war.

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[366] Nicolas Bauche, 'Fettouma Bouamari. Les yeux charbon noir', *Libération*, 13 September 2006 <https://next.liberation.fr/cinema/2006/09/13/fettouma-bouamari-les-yeux-charbon-noir_51096> [accessed 28 September 2014].
[367] Ibid.

Often framed in medium shots, with the camera focusing on her makeup and her dark eyes, before she and Amel leave on their journey, Khadija enters Hadj Slimane's shop dressed in Western clothes. She is enquiring about Amel's husband. Hadj Slimane wears a white *jellaba* and holds a *misbah* (a Rosary made of wooden beads used to glorify the names of God), two symbols of his piety. Their conversation reproduces their ideological differences. They speak in French, until Khadija remarks in *darija*, 'Zaama hajite' ('so apparently you went to the hadj'). A shot-reverse-shot isolates the newly pious Hadj against a frame on the wall displaying religious inscriptions. Khadija's turn to *darija*, instead of using religious expressions, can be seen as a disrespectful gesture in this context, and it challenges the Hadj's piety, contrasting with the Quranic inscriptions in his shop.

In a later scene, Khadija similarly refuses to be addressed as *hadja*, the female version of *hadj*, when there are other names in *darija* which do not carry such religious overtones. The shop owner who has addressed her as *hadja* substantiates his claim, in French, by claiming that '*hadja*' is 'à la mode'. Khadija bursts out in *darija* saying 'kaouad maa *hadja*' (bugger off with your '*hadja*'), as she storms away from the old man, which can be taken as an example of *darija*'s power to challenge dominant religious discourse. French, meanwhile, does not carry the same oppositional weight. The point is not that Khadija rejects Islam – rather, she rejects a religious name imposed upon her. She does accept the name *mujahida*, itself infused with religious meaning: it is an Arabic name derived from *jihad*, associated with a war in the name of God; but in the Algerian context its primary associations are (or were) with the anti-colonial war.

Khadija's gun and *haïk* revive the *mujahida* figure. Khadija, aware of the use of the veil as a disguise rather than a guarantor of moral behaviour, declares while

getting dressed in the *haïk*: 'on va leur en donner de la femme respectable'. She thus denounces society's hypocrisy towards unveiled women. The *haïk* is also symbolic of the anti-colonial struggle. Specifically, as Frantz Fanon argued, it is a means by which women resisted colonial power (as well as a disguise used occasionally by men during the Algerian war).[368] However, with the popularisation of the *tchador* (a black fabric covering women's bodies) during the Iranian revolution, not all Algerian women accept the *haïk* as a 'proper' traditional veil. Anne-Emmanuelle Berger remarks that girls in the 1990s wearing the *hijab* (the dress that covers the body and the scarf that covers the head) dismissed the *haïk* as a symbol of pre-colonial Algeria and of the Turkish presence.[369] The name *hijab* was preferred to *tchador* as it came to 'represent a transnational "pan-Islamic movement"' in the 1980s, after the Iranian revolution, and the *hijab* was linked to the Quran in ways that the *haïk* was not.[370]

As Amel and Khadija travel through the *maquis* in search of Amel's husband, they are captured by terrorists and brought to the *maquis*. Khadija encounters Hadj Slimane again, as he is in charge at the terrorist camp. Khadja and Hadj Slimane begin conversing in *darija*, yet they soon shift to French. Khadija's words, coupled with the camera's movement, corner Hadj Slimane, and their conversation takes on a more intimate tone. Though Khadija is off screen, her words disorient Hadj Slimane, who stumbles around, trying to escape. Khadija accuses him, in French – ironically, as they are discussing the colonial war – of betraying the Algerian war ideals: 'tu as oublié le mot Liberté'. Khadija's use of the French word

[368] Frantz Fanon, 'L'Algérie se dévoile', *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* (Paris: Maspéro, 1960), pp. 16-50 (p.19).
[369] Anne-Emmanuelle Berger, 'The Newly Veiled Woman: Irigaray, Specularity, and the Islamic Veil', *Diactrics*, 28.1 (1998), 94-117 (p. 106).
[370] Ibid., p. 103.

Liberté is reminiscent of the French revolutionary rallying cry and motto, later appropriated as an anti-colonial call during the Algerian war. Khadija and Hadj Slimane's conversation confirms that there is no longer any common ground between the former allies, even though they share a language and a history. French cannot resolve the ideological issues between them, and nor can *darija*.

Arabic newspapers, such as *Al Shorouk*, the second largest-daily newspaper, vehemently attacked the film because it tarnished the image of the *mujahidin* by implying that they became terrorists (like Hadj Slimane).[371] Algeria's national narrative privileges the events of the glorious war and the actions of the *mujahidin* in defeating the colonial power. However, the press reviews ignored the role played by the *mujahidates* during the war. Similarly, Algerian journalist Amine Réda, writing in the Francophone *Liberté*, accused the film of undermining the image of the nation by asking the question: 'qui tue qui?', a question that recurred in the French media during the Black Decade because the Algerian army was suspected of taking part in terrorist acts.[372]

In addition to its depiction of the *mujahidin*, the film was unanimously attacked by sections of the media for depicting unlikely situations: two women walking on their own without fear of terrorists; Khadija smoking freely in the street; and Amel fearlessly threatening men with a gun in a coffee place.[373] Algerian journalists persistently criticized Khadija's smoking on the street. The journalists commented that a woman smoking was not an emancipatory act.[374] However,

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[371] Zahia Mancer, 'Tastamirru al mahzala: Number One wa Barkat! youtaouajoun bil dhahab fi Dubai', *Echorouk*, 18 December 2006 <http://www.echoroukonline.com/ara/?news=9900> [accessed 2 February 2015].
[372] Amine Réda, 'Ces films qui offrent des "clichés" de l'Algérie. Viva Laldjérie, l'Autre monde, Barakat et Bled Number One, *Liberté*, 25 December 2006 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/liberte/69637> [accessed 2 February 2015].
[373] Ibid.
[374] Ibid.

although smoking may not be emancipatory, and *Barakat!* remains a fiction, the extent to which journalists reproduced in their writing a set of orthodox moral judgments about this simple gesture is still striking.

One of the 'improbable' scenes criticised by the newspapers, Amel's use of a gun to threaten a man, in a male-only restaurant, captures the violence Amel is subjected to, including the male gaze of men who obscenely discuss her presence in *darija*. Fearless, Amel defies these men in *darija*, replying 'you want to see? I dare you to come and see me'. She uses the same language as the men, displaying a regained sense of confidence and empowerment. Yet she perpetuates violence herself: she took the gun from her father's house, a gesture that suggests that violence is inherited and cyclical.

Amel also swears, at this moment and throughout the film. In fact, the car in which she and Khadija travel offers a private space for Amel to voice her discontent – and to swear. Sociolinguists consider swearing a socially constructed linguistic practice associated with identity building and discursive power. Lars-Gunar Andersson and Peter Trudgill suggest that swearing is culture-specific and can be used to 'express strong emotions and attitudes', and it 'refers to something that is taboo and/or stigmatised in the culture'.[375] Furthermore, there is a gendered dimension to the disapproving of swearing perceived as more acceptable coming from men than women.[376] Hence, when Amel swears 'pays de merde', it has a double implication: she expresses her anger and frustration towards Algeria's muddled situation and the incapacity of the state to find her husband; she also engages with a taboo subject – that is, disrespecting the nation. However, Amel uses

[375] Lars-Gunnar Andersson and Peter Trudgill, *Bad Language* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 53.
[376] Karyn Stapleton, 'Gender and Swearing: A Community Practice', *Women and Language*, 26.2 (2003), 22-33 (p. 22).

French and not *darija*. This moment, I suggest, distances her, as a French woman, from the Algerian viewer. Her swearing becomes more associated with her status of French émigrée than as an Algerian doctor. Amel continues to swear in order to assert her empowerment. Khadija, on the other hand, never insults or curses the country, and thus maintains a link to her *mujahida* past.

When Amel and Khadija are eventually released from the terrorist camp, a man from the camp takes the car keys and their shoes, asking in French for 'les clés du carrosse' and 'les pantoufles de verre', an ironic reference to Cinderella. The man stresses to Amel, in French, that as a doctor, because of the Hippocratic Oath, she cannot refuse to treat a wounded terrorist. His sardonic tone demonstrates his cruelty, even though he is dressed as an 'intellectual' with reading glasses and Western clothes. These veiled threats in French are more nuanced than the stereotyped image of the barbarous Islamist terrorist who only speaks *darija* or Standard Arabic. In the camp, only a few religious words are heard: for example, 'Allah Akbar' الله أكبر ('God is Great') and 'Astaghfiru Allah' أستغفر الله ('By God's Mercy') both said as the women pass by to signify the terrorists' unwillingness to see women.

Amel's husband, on the other hand, conforms to the idea of the Francophone intellectual who resists the Islamists' influence; he is a Francophone journalist, although the content of his article is not disclosed. When Amel finds out that her husband has been kidnapped, she cannot understand why – because, as she points out, the Islamists do not read French and thus could not have read his article (although some Islamists can read French as some of the recruits were amongst the highly educated). The significance of the French language was a recurring theme of the Islamists' discourse, even before violence erupted in 1992. Gilles Kepel writes

that Ali Benhadj, one of the FIS political leaders, wanted to remove the French presence 'intellectually and ideologically', and that he viewed that the state itself was a 'Westernized entity'.[377]

After their release from the terrorist camp, Khadija and Amel walk barefoot along a mountainous road. They are surrounded by green trees and followed by a hand-held camera. The camera highlights their suffering while walking. The beauty that surrounds them contrasts with the harshness of Amel's words as she mocks Khadija, in *darija*, for failing to defend them despite her *mujahida* past. She suggests, in French, that the work done by Khadija's generation during the anti-colonial war was hastily thrown together and was a 'bricolage'. Khadija vehemently replies, in a medium close-up that emphasises her anger, that without 'bricolage' Amel's generation would still be shining the shoes of the French colonisers. Amel is now off screen; Khadija, alone on screen, speaks authoritatively, in French, of the contribution of the *mujahidates* during the war.

The scene exemplifies how the two protagonists use *darija* and French alternatively to mock, assert and contest the actions of one another. Amel's swearing challenges the 'appropriate' feminine behaviour attached to her social status as a doctor. Khadija also freely expresses her opinions and contrasts with the image of the 'politically correct' *mujahida* and an old, respectable woman. Khadija's forthright speech also reminds the viewer that the *mujahidates* have been set aside for too long, and they deserve a place in the national narrative. Khadija's point is evident in how few Algerian films have *mujahidates* as protagonists, which reflects the marginalised place they have in most accounts of Algerian history.[378]

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[377] Gilles Kepel, 'Islamism and the State in Algeria and Egypt', *Daedelus*, 124.3 (1995), 109-127 (p. 121).
[378] Ryme Seferdjeli, 'Rethiking the History of the *Mujahidat* During the Algerian War', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 14.2 (2012), 238-255.

Amel and Khadija's unhurried journey is visually enhanced by the film's soundtrack and the long shots that depict the beauty of nature: the sea, the *maquis*, and the green mountainous roads. The contrast between the beauty of the landscape and the tragic events is heightened by the music. Throughout the film, the *oud* is played by Alla, an Algerian musician who was rediscovered in the 1970s when Algerian television broadcast his tunes in television programs. Alla developped a form of hybrid music, the 'foundou', mixing Arabic and African rhythms.[379] In the film, his music is used to enhance moments of anxiety and doubt when Khadija and Amel are on their journey.

Silence also has an important role. It manifests Amel's fear, internal tension, and anguish. Silence also allows the viewer to contemplate the beauty of nature. Before they set off on their journey Amel and Khadija sit silently peeling vegetables, and a long shot reveals the calm sea in the background. The silence brings to the forefront the contrast between the beauty of nature and the agony of their waiting for news about Amel's husband. Silence is often used in auteur films; a striking example is Abbas Kiarostami's *Taste of Cherry* (1997) where silence reveals nature's beauty and contrasts it with the protagonist's death drive. In *Barakat!*, a panoramic long shot reveals the beauty of the *maquis*, a sinuous road lined with green trees. The viewer is invited to appreciate the composition yet remain aware of the danger that Khadija and Amel face.

Amel ends her journey by returning home, and finding Mourad through her own efforts, without help from the police. Her self-assertion and empowerment are visually accentuated in these final moments. At the film's start, she is often filmed

[379] Foundou is an Arabized version of the French 'Fond deux' that refers to the mine where Alla's father worked under French colonial rule, and foundou expresses the suffering of the poor.

from above, from a high angle, her face closed and worried, as if she were carrying the burden of the civil war. Her expression becomes lighter, to reveal her emotional change. She also gets physically closer to Khadija, filmed sleeping in her arms, taking care of her, finding medicine and calling her affectionately 'mimti' (little mother). After she finds her husband, the lighting accentuates the radiance from her face, as if to suggest the end of the dark period.

The police's lack of interest in Mourad's disappearance, and their subsequent refusal of Amel's request to find him (as she brought the wrong photo ID), reveals their bureaucratic apathy. The policeman impassively addresses Amel in French and *darija*, which confirms that state agents use French. However, sharing the same languages does not bring them together, and the distance is visually translated by the scene's composition: Amel stands over the seated policeman, looking down at him morally and physically.

Even after Mourad is found, he is never seen on screen. Only the photograph signals his appearance and existence. Mourad represents the 'disparus', those who disappeared during the Black Decade – abducted by Islamist armed groups or Algerian secret services – and who never returned. The film does not attempt to definitely resolve the question of these 'disparus', it only suggests that the Algerian history of the Black Decade is complex. One old man who helps Amel and Khadija, a widower, summarises the muddiness of the Black Decade: he says that his sons have been missing for three years, though he does not know if they have been killed or are the ones doing the killing.

The question of the 'disparus' is thorny. Families demand the truth from the Algerian state about the 15,000 to 20,000 people, mainly men, who have never been

found.[380] They were taken by security services from their homes and places of work. These 'disparus' have not been declared dead, so their families cannot mourn them. This situation is similar to the dictatorship of 1976 to 1983 in Argentina, when many people went missing, and their mothers and grandmothers protested in public places to demand the truth. Many Argentine films re-tell these events and raise the question of the disappeared – but this is not the case in Algeria. *Barakat!* only timidly criticises the state's actions in failing to protect the population or find those who have disappeared. Rather, the film just asks for the violence to cease: in the final scene, Khadija and the old man dispose of Amel's gun by throwing it into the sea, shouting 'Barakat!'

L'Inspecteur mène l'enquête… *Morituri*: Investigating Algeria's Darkness

Morituri was released in 2007 in France and Algeria, directed by Okacha Touita, who also co-adapted the screenplay from Yasmina Khadra's 1997 French novel of the same name.[381] *Morituri* was Khadra's first novel published in France where it received critical and commercial success, whereas the writer's seven previous books had been published only in Algeria.[382] The book's title, *Morituri*, also references the Latin expresion: 'Ave, Imperator, morituri te salutant' (Hail, Emperor, those who are about to die salute you').[383] The film's events unfold during the Black Decade and

[380] Algeria-Watch and Salah-Eddine Sidhoum, 'Les Disparitions forcées en Algérie: un crime qui perdure', *Algeria Watch*, July 2014 <https://algeriawatch.org/fr/mrv/mrvdisp/cas_disparitions/disparitions_introduction.htm> [accessed 21 August 2016].
[381] Khadra is the former Algerian army official Mohammed Mousselhoul, a feminine pen name to preserve (for a time) his anonymity.
[382] Claudia Canu, 'Le Polar maghrébin sous la plume de Yasmina Khadra: comment l'enquête policière deviant enquête politique', Belphégor, 9.3 (2010) <https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/bitstream/handle/10222/47790/09_03_canucl_khadra_fr_cont.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> [accessed 9 February 2017].
[383] Larousse Dictionary in French, <https://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/divers/Ave_Caesar_morituri_te_salutant/106865> [accessed 19 December 2019].

follow Brahim Llob, a police commissioner and novelist. He is invited by Malek Ghoul – a former state official – to a party and is asked to find his missing daughter Sabrina. Llob's investigation, with the help of his lieutenants Dino and Serdj, and the former commissioner Dine, uncovers a political-financial mafia involved in ordering the assassination of Algerian intellectuals, financing terrorist groups, and embezzling money from the Algerian National Bank. Llob learns that he has been manipulated by the mafia, which is headed by Ghoul. At the end of the film, he confronts Ghoul and kills him.

Touita is a French-Algerian director and actor, born in Algeria in 1943 but living in France since 1963. Toutia's most prominent film, *Les Sacrifiés* (1982), exposed the fratricidal struggle between the MNA (*Mouvement National Algérien*) and the FLN in 1958 in France – a subject hardly discussed in Algeria or in France.[384] Like Les *Sacrifiés, Morituri* explores events otherwise rarely addressed, and advances the idea that the tragedies of the Black Decade were the work of a mafia, allied with Islamists, that sought to exploit the confusion for its own material and political gain. The film's music by Rachid Taha, and the use of *darija* and French, complement Toutia's political take on the events. Taha, a French-Algerian musician well known for his politics in France against immigration laws, arranged a song, *Hassbouhoum,* played during the film's credits. In *darija,* the title means 'make them accountable', and the lyrics – 'jail them, punish them, they have robbed us' – reinforce the film's message that people in power have to pay for their misdeeds.

[384] 'Film *Les Sacrifiés*', Maghreb des films website <http://www.maghrebdesfilms.fr/sacrifies-les.html> [accessed 9 February 2017].

Touita adapted *Morituri* with the French screenwriters Michel Alexandre and Nadia Char. The plot, location and characters' names match the novel. Despite the involvement of French screenwriters, Touita gives a prominent place to *darija.*[385] He explained that Khadra's novel appealed to him through its use of language: 'c'était la première fois que je voyais quelqu'un traduire l'arabe dialectal en un français aussi magnifique'.[386] *Darija* brings to the film a sense of verisimilitude, especially as it alternates with French and Standard Arabic; and I argue that the switching between languages emphasises the complex political situation presented in the film as neither French nor Standard Arabic can be fixed to a specific ideological position: terrorists are not exclusively Standard Arabic speakers, and intellectuals are not only Francophones, as observed by the Algerian scholar Addi Lahouari.[387]

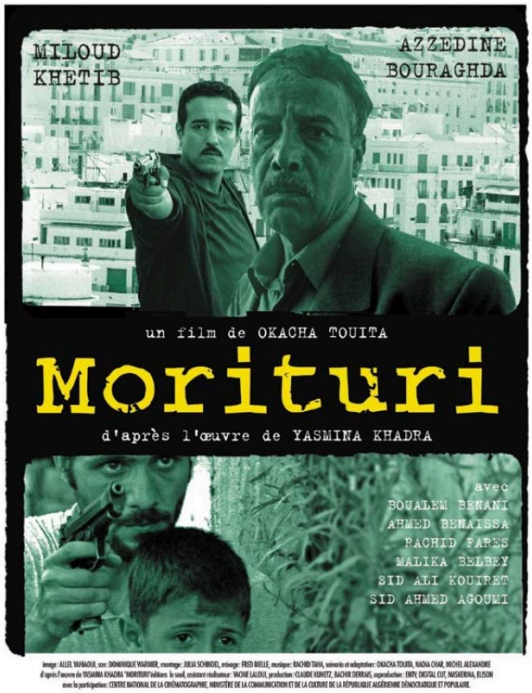

Figure 17. *Morituri*'s poster

[385] Alexandre has a long career in scriptwriting and worked on various French films such as Bertrand Tavernier's *L.627* (1992), and André Téchiné's *Les Voleurs* (1996).
[386] '*Morituri* Press Kit', Unifrance website <https://medias.unifrance.org/medias/148/106/27284/ presse/morituri-dossier-de-presse-francais.pdf> [accessed 10 January 2017].
[387] Addi Lahouari, 'Algeria's Democracy Between the Islamists and the Elite', *Middle East Report*, 175 (1992), 36-38 (p. 37).

Morituri is Touita's fourth feature, for which he amassed 400,000 euros – a medium budget – from the CNC, French producers, and Algerian television. He also received support from the Algerian Ministry of Culture.[388] The film premiered in Algiers at the event 'Alger: capitale du monde arabe.' It received positive reviews from the Algerian press, who praising it for asking thorny questions of the Black Decade, such as who was behind the chaos (or at least, who was behind certain incidents).[389] *Morituri* does not seem to have been released widely in Algeria, however. In France, *Morituri* did not attract wide audiences; it received mixed reviews, with the French journalist Eric Loret, in *Libération*, describing it as 'un film bancal à faible budget'.[390]

Touita employed well-known Algerian actors: Sid Ahmed Agoumi (Sid Lankabout) who has a successful television career in Algeria; Sid Ali Kouiret (Haj Garne), who acted in numerous Algerian films in the 1970s; and Miloud Khetib (Llob), a theatre actor trained at the *Comédie Française* who lives in France, and also starred in *Les Sacrifiés*. Despite these stars, the acting resembles a telenovela with over-acting, gesturing while at times the lines are delivered in a monotonous way. The film's plot does not unfold easily. Its editing is incoherent; scenes jump from one scene to another without apparent logic. For example, at one moment Llob and Lino chase down a man, who escapes by jumping into the sea. The relation of this man to the investigation remains unclear. The discontinuous editing accompanies changes of language; it makes the significance of the language used in

[388] '*Morituri* Press Kit'.
[389] Smail K. 'Morituri, un polar historiquement réaliste', *El Watan*, 3 February 2007 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/elwatan/60052> [accessed 19 January 2017].
[390] Eric Loret, '"Morituri" à l'étouffée', *Libération*, 25 April 2007 <https://next.liberation.fr/cinema/2007/04/25/morituri-a-l-etouffee_91358> [accessed 18 January 2017].

the film less easily readable, and contributes to a chaotic feeling, all elements that translate the political and ideological confusion during the Black Decade.

Llob is introduced to the viewer while he is getting ready in the morning. A medium- shot pans through his cramped apartment, and Llob's voice is heard in French while he expresses his fear of going out to work. The policeman is characterised by his unkempt appearance: an over-sized suit, dusty shoes, and an old car. Llob resembles the American television character Colombo. Unlike Colombo, however, he does not solve this case. The viewer never finds out what happened to Sabrina Ghoul. Instead, Llob uncovers a political plot. Yumna Siddiqi has identified a 'recent spate of postcolonial novels that use the format of the mystery or detective story but tweak it or turn it inside out in what becomes a narrative of "social detection"'.[391] Llob can certainly be seen as a 'postcolonial detective': his investigation ends up focusing on the political turmoil rather than the individual crime.

A repeated motif in the film is Llob's monologues in French, variously diegetic and in voice-over. In these, he bitterly comments on Algerian politics as well as his personal thoughts and beliefs. The film continually switches from point-of-view shots from Llob's perspective to shots of him in his immediate environment; the film makes clear that it depicts Llob's subjective take on events. The policeman tells himself that the terrorists are Algerians – but Algerians who kill other Algerians. In one instance, he directly addresses the viewer: 'Et regarde maintenant, te reconnais-tu en eux? Moi? Pas du tout'. His pessimistic thoughts contrast with the beauty of the scene as he walks by the sea in the sunshine. This is one of the few

[391] Yumna Siddiqi, 'Police and Postcolonial Rationality in Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason'*, *Cultural Critique*, 50 (2002), 175-211 (p. 176).

moments where Llob, and the viewer, escape the busy and dangerous streets of Algiers. He uses French for these moments, as for the novels that he writes, to convey poetically a sense of melancholy, sadness and introspection, and to articulate his political views.

French is used in the film by characters from various backgrounds: the upper-class state officials, the prostitute who works at *Les Limbes rouges* where Ghoul's daughter was last seen, and by police officers. The French name of the cabaret, *Les Limbes rouges*, is a metaphor for Algeria's political messy situation: it is actually a brothel, where influential men act immorally, yet where all is kept secret. In this way, French is not expressly associated with any particular ideological stance. Rather, French is a 'normal' mode of speech, which is part of the daily lives of many Algerians in post-independence Algeria, and no longer connotes colonialism as much as it once did.

Standard Arabic is spoken rarely, mainly by state officials and it is associated with corruption and immorality. The corrupt banker whom Llob and Dine visit to extract information from, speaks mainly in Standard Arabic. He speaks softly, while sat on a leather couch in a shiny yellow bathrobe as he offers expensive pastries to the two policemen. His outfit and setting feminize him (as Ghoul is elsewhere feminized in a red bathrobe). The man reveals to Llob that he has been manipulated, sent down the wrong path when actually he should be investigating in another direction. The banker's corrupt morals are associated with lavish surroundings and his use of Standard Arabic.

Llob discovers that Ghoul is the head of the organisation which ordered the assassination of intellectuals and civilians, so he decides to confront him in his house. Ghoul's name in *darija* suggests a monster and evil spirit. Llob covers some

of Ghoul's walls with images of slaughtered children and men, victims of terrorist killings. These highly explicit images are disturbing and hard to look at. When Ghoul returns and finds Llob, he bursts accusingly into *darija*: for him the policeman's status is so insignificant that he cannot arrest him. Turning to French, he contends: 'Nous avons pris un mauvais départ dès 54 [1954], notre révolution est un fiasco, la preuve: après trente années d'indépendance c'est la régression, le totalitarisme, le règne de la mediocrité'.

For Ghoul, the actual war is an 'aubaine'. His speech reveals his thirst for power, his 'ghoulishness', which is at that point compounded by his use of French. Although he evokes the Algerian revolution he uses French to assert his worldview. French, the colonial language, has become in this scene the 'Algerian' language that justifies banditry and crime. French and *darija* in the scene are the languages of the political mafia that Ghoul represents. Llob stands at a distance from Ghoul, who is sitting on a couch. The physical separation between them enhances their ideological difference. The policeman replies in *darija* that 'there are three types of judgement: conscience, justice and God. And while the first two have failed, the third will not, and it is waiting for you'. Llob's comment on God marks his attachment to religion although he then shoots Ghoul, proving his own attachment to justice above morals. In the book, Llob's lines are delivered in French, but the film translates them to *darija*, a decision that associates the language with justice, rather than the Standard Arabic of the state officials to whom Llob chooses not to defer. *Darija* becomes the language of the Black Decade's violence but also of eventual justice.

The viewer's emotional identification with Llob is likely to reach its climax in this scene. A quick montage of the violent pictures taken at crime scenes gives context to the policeman's emotions. We see the close-ups of massacred bodies, we

are reminded of the horrors he has witnessed through the film and during the Black Decade more generally, which include the murders of his colleague Serdj and his friend Joher, the latter's head found in a toilet bowl. Llob's killing of Ghoul is thus justified, in the film's logic, and confirms his commitment to justice.

The theory expounded in the film of a plot hatched by a politico-financial mafia offers a simple and reductive explanation for a very complex political, economic and social situation. The theory seems to satisfy Llob (and, by extension Khadra and Touita) but is unsatisfying for the viewer. There remains an opportunity for a more in-depth explanation than this near-conspiracy theory can offer. The historians Martin Evans and John Philips summarise the confused and complex situation: 'By 1996 Algeria had become a murky place with no dividing line between truth and untruth. With no dates, no battles, no chronology, the dirty war on terror was shapeless, inchoate and never-ending […] In this confused atmosphere Algeria became trapped in a series of mysteries […] who was killing whom and why?'[392]

Morituri presents the point of view of a policeman who uses every language at his disposal to share his thoughts. He masters Standard Arabic, *darija* and French, though the film – like *Barakat!* – blurs the ideological associations of each language during the Black Decade and the chaos during that period. French goes from being neutral to being the language of corruption; *darija* is the language of everyday violence but also eventual justice, while Standard Arabic is the language of a corrupt elite. Hence, ideological associations can be blurred, but they can also shift and rest for a moment with particular ideological positions.

[392] Martin Evans and John Phillips, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 225.

Casanegra and *Roma ouella n'touma*: Rebels with a Cause?

In this section I will conjointly examine the Moroccan *Casanegra* (Dir. Noureddine Lakhmari, 2007) and Algerian *Roma ouella n'touma* (Dir. Tariq Téguia, 2006) as these films similarly focus on young, twenty-something protagonists, from modest origins, who wish to flee their respective countries, and use urban *darija* to assert themselves socially and politically. I aim at comparing and investigating how both films employ *darija* to give these youths an 'authentic' voice, an effect contributed to by both films' use of non-professional actors. In *Casanegra*, *darija* allows the protagonists to freely criticise Moroccan society and politics, and to challenge traditional forms of authority, primarily the father and the state. *Darija* also gives a realistic feel to the film, and it is what makes the film politically significant. The language of *Roma ouella n'touma* is Algiers's *darija*, and allows the protagonists, Kamel and Zina, to create their own world linguistically. Thus, they can escape their reality and dream of a better future, even though they never leave Algeria. French, on the other hand, is not particularly present in either film. In *Casanegera*, it is negatively associated with the upper classes, femininity, even effeminacy. In *Roma ouella n'touma,* French is occasionally integrated with *darija*, and has fewer class connotations than in *Casanegra*. French was also the language of *Roma ouella n'touma*'s script.

The American scholar Wahneema Lubiano argues that although 'vernacular language and cultural productions allow the possibility of discursive power disruptions, of cultural resistance, they do not guarantee it.'[393] Téguia's film proves

[393] Wahneema Lubiano, 'But Compared to What?: Reading Realism, Representation, and Essentialism in *School Daze*, *Do the Right Thing*, and the Spike Lee Discourse', *Black American Literature Forum*, 25.2 (1991), 253-282 (p. 264).

Lubiano's stance as *darija* allows young Algerians to resist both cultural and linguistic hegemony, but only as a fantasy. *Darija* also serves the function described by Susan Gal when she observes that 'resistance to a dominant cultural order occurs […] when devalued linguistic forms and practices (such as local vernacular, slang […], and poetry) are practiced and celebrated.'[394]

Violence – the ability to both inflict and take it – combined with crude *darija* are presented in *Casanegra* as essential elements of the empowerment of the two protagonists Adil and Karim. The language spoken in this film corresponds to Casablanca's actual street language and it conveys the characters' violence. The film is punctuated with vulgar insults such as '*dine omok'* ('curse your mother's religion!'), *'dine babak'* ('curse your father's religion!'), *'kaouad'* ('bugger off!') – language broadly equivalent to that found in social drama films such as *La Haine* (Dir. Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995) or *Boyz N the Hood* (Dir. John Singleton, 1991). The anthropologist Vivian De Klerk examining youth discussions in an American high school argues that obscene language and swearing are for men 'linguistic strategies marking either power or solidarity', and this is attested by Adil and Karim whose swearing and crude language carries 'connotations of strength, masculinity and confidence' and provides them with provide them with an assertion of dominance.[395]

Roma ouella n'touma's director Téguia wrote the script in French and translated it into *darija*. He wanted Algerian Arabic dialect to be heard, and he insisted on using Algiers street language because he did not want to use a '"novlangue", a mixture of Standard Arabic and dialectal Arabic, which the *téléfilms*

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[394] Susan Gal, 'Language, Gender and Power: An Anthropological Review', in *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self,* ed. by. Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 169-182 (p. 175).
[395] Vivian De Klerk, 'The Role of Expletives in the Construction of Masculinity', in *Language and Masculinity*, ed. by. Johnson Sally and Ulrika Hanna Meinhof (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 144-158 (p. 145).

produced for Algerian television usually allow us to hear.[396] Téguia assimilates *darija* into the Algerian language, and observes: 'Je me demande d'ailleurs s'il ne faudrait pas simplement dire "l'algérien", comme il existe, à partir d'un socle latin commun, le français, l'italien, l'espagnol, etc'.[397] As noted earlier in the introduction, *darija*, escaping state regulation, freely includes words from other languages and is gaining greater prominence in domains conventionally associated with Standard Arabic.

Darija in both films was perceived by journalists as making the films plausible and 'realistic'. Birger Langkjær defines realism in film as covering 'realism of style (visual and acting style, mise-en-scène)' and the 'recognition of social, psychological, cultural and even emotional elements'.[398] The Algerian journalist Hind O, also suggests that *darija* in *Roma ouella n'touma* 'nous met de plain-pied dans notre réalité socioculturelle'.[399] Similarly, Moroccan journalists considered *Casanegra*'s *darija* to provide a realistic representation of the language of a section of Morocco's population elsewhere neglected by the media.[400] Lakhmari noted that none of his actors – professional or non-professionals – was from the milieu he sought to depict, so he had to prepare his leads by taking them into Casablanca's nightclubs and streets.[401]

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[396] Eric Vidal, 'Entretien avec Tariq Téguia', *La pensée de midi*, 22.3 (2007), 167-172 (p. 170).
[397] Ibid.
[398] Birger Langkjær, 'Realism and Danish Cinema', in *Realism and Reality in Film and Media*, ed. by Anne Jerslev (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2002), pp. 15-40 (p. 20).
[399] O, 'Un défi relevé malgré tout', *L'Expression*, 21 Jun 2007 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/lexpression/44005> [accessed 15 June 2015].
[400] Amine Harmach, '"Casanegra", la face sombre de Casablanca', *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 16 December 2008 <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourdhui/65987> [accessed 17 July 2017].
[401] 'Interview with Nourredine Lakhmari', *Casanegera* DVD release, 2010.

The actors and producers subsequently insisted that the places they visited in Casablanca, and the language used, were far more violent than how the film depicted them.[402] Moroccan journalist, Ahmed Benchemsi – who had founded the first *darija* newspaper *Nichane*, soon repressed by the state – argued that *Casanegra* pressed Moroccans to look at themselves in an honest way and that life in the slums would not have been depicted accurately if the character spoke a 'median civilised Arabic' or the Arabic spoken on television, which the 'government tries to impose upon us'.[403] Thus, using the local urban language was understood to convey realistically the socioeconomic and political situation represented by the film. That both films are fictions again tended to be overlooked in the press, as if their use of language and their realistic feel were the only elements to consider.

The films' titles set their tone and confirm their linguistic politics. *Casanegra* bears witness to the blackness of the film, opposed to the 'whiteness' of the city Casa-*blanca*, and the romance of the film *Casablanca* (Dir. Michael Curtiz, 1942).[404] Social inequalities permeate the film and highlight Morocco's social and political situation: corruption, everyday violence (either in the private sphere or on the street), and youth unemployment. Lakhmari explained that *Casanegra* is a 'voyeuristic' film as he wanted audiences 'to feel on the screen the shock of violence'.[405]

'Roma ouella n'touma', meanwhile, is a football anthem chanted in Algerian stadiums, addressed to politicians: 'Rome rather than you'. Football supporters usually chant this theme as they wave English, Canadian, Italian and even French

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[402] Ibid.
[403] Ahmed Benchemsi, 'La realité telle qu'elle est', *TelQuel*, 17 May 2009.
[404] '*Casanegra* Press Kit', Le France website <http://lefrance.ntic.fr/fiches/Casanegra.pdf> [accessed 17 July 2017].
[405] Mahmoud Jemni, 'Entretien avec Nour-Eddine Lakhmari, cinéaste', *Africiné*, 2 February 2010 <http://www.africine.org/?menu=art&no=9171&rech=1> [accessed 2 February 2017].

flags to signify their rejection of nationalist Algerian politicians: any other country (particularly a Western country) is better than 'here'.[406] The mention of Rome also signals the globalization of football. In the 1990s, Algerian supporters began to identify with foreign teams and even 'Italianised' their teams: the Algiers Union Football Club (USMA) was nicknamed AC Milan. At the beginning of the film, when the two protagonists meet in the street, Kamel asks Zina to leave with him for Rome, and she immediately replies: 'Roma ouella n'touma!'

The association of the film with football is politically significant. In the post-independence period, football was used by the state for social unity and national pride. By the 1980s, however, it had become a 'weekly ritual for the public to vent its political and social frustration'.[407] Football chants became 'one of the few available forums for excluded youths to openly declare their resentments, to send politicized signals to society at large and to claim their autonomy, normality and their rights to mobility and consumption'.[408] Football is significant because it allows subversive social gestures for its fan: in the stadium, they can speak freely in *darija*, as they can in Téguia's film.

Although *Roma ouella n'touma* takes place in 1997, in the midst of the Black Decade, violence is hardly seen, and the film's focus is the impossibility for the young protagonists to freely move out from Algeria, a theme that was still relevant when the film came out. *Roma ouella n'touma* narrates twenty-four hours in a journey undertaken by Zina and Kamel, two Algerians in their twenties. They are

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[406] Youcef Fates, 'Les Mots du stade: modalité inédite d'expression politique de la jeunesse algérienne', *Les Ouvrages du Crasc*, 2013, 199-221 (p. 217) <http://ouvrages.crasc.dz /pdfs/20 13_espace_pub_fates.pdf> [accessed 2 February 217].
[407] Boum, 'Shoot-Outs for the Nation: Football and Politics in Post-Colonial Moroccan Algerian Relations', *Soccer and Society*, 14.4 (2013), 548-564 (p. 558).
[408] Mahfoud Amara, 'Football Sub-Culture and Youth Politics in Algeria', *Mediterranean Politics*, 17.1 (2012), 41-58 (p. 55).

looking for a sailor, El Bosco, who supposedly can help Kamel to leave Algeria for Italy, from where he was expelled when living there as he was an illegal immigrant. The film begins in Algiers, focusing on illegal goings-on: terrorist activities in a print shop, smuggling activities around the port, and racketeering. The rest of the film takes place in La Madrague, a port twenty kilometres west of Algiers, often seen as the city's periphery. Delayed in their quest by zealous and aggressive policemen, Zina and Kamel find themselves restricted by the curfew imposed during the Black Decade (from 9 pm to 5 am) and have to spend the night at La Madrague with Kamel's friend, Merzak, at a bakery. In the morning, Kamel and Zina find El Bosco dead in his bath, probably shot by terrorists, but the plot remains unclear. At the end of the film, while Kamel and Zina leave El Bosco's house, after finding passports and an American Green Card, Zina drives the getaway car. Suddenly, two young men appear and shoot at the car. Kamel is wounded and hallucinates as he and Zina escape in the car.

Casanegra depicts a three-day flashback in the lives of Karim and Adil, unemployed young men in their twenties, living in a poor neighbourhood of Casablanca. Adil lives with his mother and his stepfather, who often drunkenly beats his partner for money to buy drinks. Karim is the breadwinner of his family after his father was left handicapped, having worked over thirty years in a fish factory. Karim supervises young children who illegally sell cigarettes on the street. Adil's aim is to leave Morocco for Malmö, Sweden, where his uncle lives. However, all of his attempts to obtain illegal papers fail and Adil needs a visa and money to obtain it. To this end, Adil and Karim become associated with Zrirek, a violent criminal who gives Adil and Karim assignments such as extort money from a rich man, drug a horse in its stables in order to fix a race. Upon entering the stable, Adil and Karim

fight and the horse escapes. After they fail to catch the horse, they escape in a car closely followed by Zrirek and the police. When the car crashes, Adil and Karim escape on foot, at which point the narrative returns to the opening scene.

The endings of the two films offer different perspectives on the young people's prospects. In *Roma ouella n'touma*, Zina and Kamel are shot at, as they drive away. The scene is highly disorienting, with overexposed white light and the engine sounds amplified. As Zina drives, Kamel faints; he asks Zina if she can hear Hasni (the rai singer to whom Rachida listens). She responds 'jaeyh' (idiot), summing up his question and actions. In the final shot, Zina faces the camera with a frozen expression of determination: their effort to escape the country is not yet exhausted. *Casanegra*'s ending shows Adil and Karim back in their neighbourhood. Adil reveals that he now wants to leave for Norway, a country of oil and wealth. But, at the end of their journey, Kamel and Adil have not changed and will carry on with their petty thefts.

Casanegra is Lakhmari's second film. Born in Morocco in 1964, the director began his career in Norway, where he made short features largely concerned with the excluded: immigrants and people living on the margins of Norwegian society. Lakhmari's film career in Morocco began when he directed an American inspired crime series for Moroccan television *Al Kadia*, which encountered great success. Orlando identifies in *Al Kadia* various motifs that Lakhmari repeats in *Casanegra,* such as the stylisation of violence, and exposing economic inequalities.[409] *Casanegra* was Morocco's 2009 surprise box office hit. It attracted 500,000 viewers from across the spectrum of social classes, age, and gender.[410] The film was such a

[409] Orlando, 'Mean Streets, Bad Boys, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll: Morocco's Urban Legends of the 21st Century', *South Central Review*, 28.1 (2011), 52-73 (p. 58).
[410] Boukhari, 'Le coup de poing Casanegra', *TelQuel*, January 2009.

hit in Morocco that it was described by the French journalist Florence Beaugé as a 'phénomène de société'.[411] Mostly distributed in Moroccan cinemas and sold as a bootlegged DVD, *Casanegra* also circulated in international film festivals, and won the best Foreign Film at the Toronto Film Festival. It represented Morocco in the 2010 Oscars, which signalled to journalists that Moroccan cinema's authorities had accepted this film.[412]

Roma ouella n'touma was Téguia's first feature. After producing four short films in Algeria, he spent eight years gathering the necessary funds (211,000 euros) from French, German and Algerian production companies.[413] In comparison, *Casanegra* gathered 1.3 million euros from Moroccan sources.[414] Téguia, born in 1966 in Algeria, left for France after his baccalaureate in Algiers, and trained in philosophy and photography. Téguia's PhD dissertation was on the works of Swiss photographer and filmmaker Robert Frank, known for his experimental photography, which frequently refuses conventional photographic grammar. In his ground-breaking book, *The Americans* (1958), Frank drew on interdisciplinary sources across the arts – Beat literature, abstract painting, and Bebop jazz – in such a way to

[411] Florence Beaugé, '"Casanegra", film-vérité sur Casablanca, dévoile la face sombre du Maroc', *Le Monde*, 27 January 2009 < https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2009/01/27/casanegra-film-verite-sur-casablanca-devoile-la-face-sombre-du-maroc_1147066_3212.html > [accessed 12 January 2017].
[412] 'Cinéma. Casanegra bat tous les records', *La Gazette du Maroc*, 30 January 2009 <https://www.maghress.com/fr/lagazette/19317> [accessed 17 January 2017].
[413] Hubert Bals Fund, World Cinema Fund, Fonds Sud Cinéma, Conseil général du Val-de-Marne, Neffa Films and Ina.
[414] '"Casanegra" ou le côté obscur de Casablanca', *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 3 October 2008 <https://www.leconomiste.com/article/casa-negra-ou-le-cote-obscur-de-casablanca> [accessed 17 January 2017].

'confound easy reading of images'.[415] Frank's work influenced Téguia, who also drew on literary sources for intertitles with poetic quotations.[416]

Rachid Amrani, who plays Kamel in *Roma ouella n'touma*, is unemployed and was cast on the streets of Algiers. Samira Kaddour, who plays Zina, is a projectionist at Algiers's *Cinémathèque*. To further the association with Algerian cinema, Zina's mother is played by Khadra Boudehane, who worked at the *Cinémathèque* for over thirty years as a cashier.[417] Only one of the policemen, Ahmed Benaïssa, is a professional Algerian actor. Téguia directed his actors to be 'themselves' and 'to hold back from acting'.[418] Indeed Zina and Kamel are often standing or sitting with their imperturbable postures and their faces almost expressionless as if to translate the idleness of their lives and their boredom.

Unlike *Casanegra*'s warm reception in Morocco, *Roma ouella n'touma* did not endear itself to Algerian audiences, who were left puzzled by this film (for example Nancy Honicker described a screening where two Algerian students declared that the film was 'nul, nul').[419] At festivals and in France, where it was distributed, the film however gained critical recognition: it was awarded first prize at the experimental Fribourg film festival and was presented at the Venice film festival in 2006. *Le Monde* journalist Jacques Mandelbaum praised it for its audacious style and considered it a milestone in Algerian cinema.[420]

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[415] Tina Olsin Lent, 'Situating the Americans: Robert Frank and the Transformation of American Photography', (Unpublished PhD: The University of Rochester, 1994), p. v.
[416] Vidal, 'Entretien avec Tariq Téguia', p. 170.
[417] Azzeddine Mabrouki, 'Alger; un peu de tout sur le cinéma', *Africiné*, 27 February 2008 <http://www.africine.org/?menu=art&no=7384> [accessed 17 February 2017].
[418] Vidal, 'Entretien avec Tariq Téguia', p. 172.
[419] Nancy Honicker, 'Algeria Breathing Free', *Transition*, 100 (2008), 170-174 (p. 172).
[420] Mandelbaum, 'Rome plutôt que vous: un désir de liberté en terre algérienne', *Le Monde*, 15 April 2008 <https://www.lemonde.fr/cinema/article/2008/04/15/rome-plutot-que-vous-un-desir-de-liberte-en-terre-algerienne_1034562_3476.html> [accessed 18 June 2017].

The two films differ in terms of style, rhythm and characterisation. *Casanegra* was compared to Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973), with its fast pace and violent themes, as well as its references to film noir and gangster movies as well as *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996).[421] *Roma ouella n'touma*, with its long takes, long silences and deconstructed narrative, has been compared to Jean Luc Godard's *Pierrot le fou* (1965). [422] Guy Austin rightly summarises the film's Godardian techniques: 'loud ambient sound, metatextual placards, interviews to camera, repeated tracking shots, literary allusions'.[423]

Some of the most immediately noticeable characteristics of *Roma ouella n'touma* are its long moments of silence and idleness, its 'fuzzy' low-light images, and its deconstructed narrative in which many scenes are just sketches. The film, shot with a mini-DV camera, mostly hand-held, frequently uses poor or over exposed lighting. The two directors of photography, Nasser Medjkane and Hacène Ait Kaci, were professional press photographers; they used ambient lighting, with some additional neon, which Téguia associated with a 'reporter image, with its documentary feel'.[424] Only the urban sounds of Algiers are heard, and the city is hardly filmed. La Madrague, by the coast, is presented with unfinished houses, bare walls and concrete. The architecture suggests a threatening space from which can emerge a terrorist or a policeman at any moment. The Arabic name of La Madrague is El Djamila ('The Beautiful'). This name, hardly used, contrasts with the abandoned and lifeless place depicted in the film. All these elements all parts of a political aesthetic: for Téguia, the film's style and location 'go hand in hand with the

[421] Orlando, 'Mean Streets, Bad Boys, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll: Morocco's Urban Legends of the 21st Century', p. 54.
[422] Guy Austin, *Algerian National Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 132.
[423] Ibid.
[424] 'Interview with Tareq Téguia', *Roma ouella n'touma* DVD release, 2009.

poor conditions of production and even with the political status of Algeria and its economy'.[425]

Music plays a crucial role in both films, conveying the protagonists' moods and anchoring the films in the national setting with local, diegetic music. *Casanegra*'s music was composed by the American Richard Horowitz, who lived in Morocco from the late 1960s to 1979 while he studied traditional Moroccan music and the *gasba*, a traditional flute made of wood. Horowitz fused jazz themes with electronic sounds, so that the softness of the jazz contrasted with the harsh realities in the film. In *Casanegra*, the diegetic Moroccan music includes the song performed by Zrirek, the criminal for whom Adil and Karim work. Zrireck sings in a dingy traditional cabaret called, in French, *Tova bien* ('All is good' – inscribed above the front door in French and Arabic). His appearance in the cabaret associates Zrireck with the *aaroubi*, which means peasant, but has pejorative connotations of ignorance and crass manners. Zrirek sings joyously and orders the other men in the bar to sing with him. The singing creates a feeling of unity between these men, poor and drunk.

In *Roma ouella n'touma*, music marks the film's rhythm and is also reminiscent of Algeria's past. For example, the jazz rhythms that accompany Zina while she is followed by the camera getting down to the street and accompanies her steps, is Archie Shepp's jazz melody recorded at the Algiers pan-African festival in 1969 with a group of Tuaregs. The 1969 pan-African festival was the highlight of Algeria's positioning at the forefront of Third World countries, which celebrated the African fight for independence. Hundreds of delegates attended from African countries, including delegates from the African liberation movement and the Black Panthers. The festival aimed to 'discuss, explore and display the role of culture in

[425] Ibid.

revolutionary movements'.[426] Shepp is known for his Afrocentric music and his fight for African-American civil rights. The inclusion of his music has a double meaning: it reminds the viewer of Algeria's political and cultural openness, and that Shepp's struggle applies also to Algerians as well.

Téguia reinforces the links between literature, politics and music by including the poem 'Peupliers', sung by l'Hachemi l'Kerfaoui Tchamba music group. *Peupliers* was written by the poet and political activist Bachir Hadj Ali (1920–1991), director of the Algerian Communist Party between 1945 and 1962, the date of the party's prohibition. Hadj Ali was tortured by the political police of the Algerian regime. He is known for his poetry, mixing *darija* with French, and his book *Soleils sonores* (from which the poem is taken) was published in 1985 to a limited audience as it was censored in Algeria (and remains unpublished). Téguia revives Algeria's political figures and their struggle for independence but he also revives a different ideological stance – more liberal than the official post-independence Arab-Islamic ideology.

[426] Samir Meghelli, 'A Weapon in Our Struggle for Liberation: Black Arts, Black Power, and the 1969 Pan-African Cultural Festival' in *The Global Sixties in Sound and Vision*: *Media, Counterculture, Revolt* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) ed. by Timothy Scott Brown and Andrew Lison, pp. 167-184 (p. 168).

Figure 18. Zina and Kamel overlooking Algiers's port in *Roma ouella n'touma*

Roma ouella n'touma opens with a long backward tracking shot of the sky, then the distant sea, before the camera gradually descends to the lampposts – the image is grainy and accompanied only by the sound of the wind. This first scene was described by Joseph McGonagle as 'connoting spatial or temporal regression according to Western cinematic convention [in which progression would be a left – right movement] – but mirroring the direction of Arabic script [i.e. right–left]'.[427] Austin also argues that shooting from right-to-left when Zina walks in the street 'evokes progression from past to future, as in other Arabophone films'.[428] But these interpretations are unconvincing, for more than one reason. It is not only Arabophone films that include this movement; and there is a hint of exoticisation here – francophone films are not usually said to use left-to-right tracking like French writing. Agnès Varda's *Sans toit ni loi* (1985) depicts the journey of a *vagabonde* Mona using right-to-left tracking shots that accentuate Mona's loneliness and detachment from society. Right-to-left shots are thus neither the mark of Arabic

[427] Joseph McGonagle, 'Going Nowhere Fast: On the Road in Contemporary Algeria in Tariq Téguia's "Rome plutôt que vous" (2006)', in *Open Roads Closed Borders: The Contemporary French-Language Road Movie*, ed. by Michael Golt and Thibaut Schilt (Bristol: Intellect, 2013), pp. 87-102 (p. 90).
[428] Austin, *Algerian National Cinema*, p. 132.

directors nor of male directors. Furthermore, Téguia was self-consciously influenced by 'Western' filmmakers and, most importantly for the purposes of this thesis, sought to make an 'Algerian' film in *darija* which further dissociates him from the 'Arabophone' assumptions of Austin and McGonagle related to Arabic script. The slow camera movement of this first scene only introduces the emptiness, boredom and slow pace as if to introduce the viewer to the film's rhythm.

Casablanca's art deco buildings form the backdrop to *Casanegra*; Algiers, on the other hand, hardly appears in *Roma ouella n'touma*. *Casanegra* opens with shots of Casablanca's historic town centre with its streets and art deco buildings by night, and credits in gold and grey projected onto the buildings, with accompanying jazz music. These elements establish a noir ambiance. A subsequent scene of a dog roaming around dark and empty streets and rooting through garbage anticipates the characters' downtrodden status. *Casanegra* is shot mainly at night in empty streets. The director of photography, Luca Coassin, drained the colours to intensify the visual aesthetic and its suggestions of violence. The shots of Casablanca's streets, and the framing of buildings in the foreground, give the latter a menacing appearance as abstract forms and shapes. Such elements emphasise the 'darkness' of *Casanegra*, and the black and white palette connotes threat and danger.

Figure 19. *Casanegra*'s poster with Karim and Adil (left to right)

The 'ville moderne' in Casablanca was founded by French architects, and enlarged from 1914, and its art deco architecture was avant-garde and transformative; it served as home for French and European settlers until Morocco's independence in 1959.[429] Subsequently, these buildings were occupied by modest and poor Moroccan households as a 'trésor de guerre laissé en héritage, arraché au colonisateur'.[430] Casablanca is Morocco's economic capital, the modern city, home to modern buildings and the wealthy but also the poor who have migrated from rural areas. Under French rule, Casablanca was home to political demonstrations and after independence it became the site of demonstrations in the 1970s, such as the bread revolt. Hence choosing Casablanca as the plot's backdrop accentuates the political stance of the film.

[429] Abdelmajid Arrif, 'Une esthétique de la laideur', in *Casablanca œuvre ouverte*, *Casablanca: poème urbain*, ed by. David Ruffel and Kenza Sefrioui (Casablanca: Éditions Le Fennec, 2012), pp. 67-74 (p. 70).
[430] Ibid.

Adil is often framed on his own, standing against a wall; more than once he is shot while talking to mannequins in an empty shop window. Karim, meanwhile, is typically filmed in medium shots from a low angle. The buildings that rear behind him remind us that he is struggling to escape from Casablanca. Adil and Karim are continually in motion, which signals their youthful energy and impatience to get away, though they rarely leave their neighbourhood, and the framing reveals the decaying state of the buildings. The only moment when the two young men are able to appreciate Casablanca's beauty is when they find refuge on a roof, where they drink beer and where Adil occasionally sleeps. The roof provides a distance from which they can recognise their love for their city: they joyously scream 'Casanegra'.

Figure 20. Karim and Adil (Casablanca's buildings in the background)

Both films' protagonists discuss their desire to leave their countries. For Adil, to leave the country is to escape from a difficult family situation and Morocco's corrupted morals, while Karim wants to return to Italy, where he once lived. Kamel tells Zina about his longing to explore other countries, in a long take as they stand on a bridge above a motorway and a train station, facing the port of

Algiers. All three means of travel could help them flee from Algeria, yet their separation from these places heightens the sense of their immobility. Kamel muses on Algeria's Mediterranean location, including its connection to other ports: Marseille, Barcelona, and Naples. Kamel considers it natural to desire to go these cities, close to Algiers, 'our cousins'. But when Kamel mentions leaving for Australia, Zina ironically replies in *darija*, 'What is there to do there? There are only sheep and kangaroos'. She also questions Kamel's ability to leave his *houma* (the urban neighbourhood).

This mention, in *darija*, is significant. The *houma* has a central place in the daily life of Algerian youth, it is connected to the identification and socialisation of neighbourhood lives.[431] The sociologist Kamel Rarbo argues that the 'identification with the neighbourhood is not contradictory with the desire for exile and to embark on the famous "boat for Australia"'.[432] The 'boat for Australia' is a myth that emerged in the 1980s about a boat that would take all Algerians willing to leave Algeria to Australia. It symbolises the 'symbolic cultural and material frustration' of the young people, as well as 'their fears and uncertainties with regard to unemployment'.[433] Yet Kamel remains optimistic. He proclaims, 'tahya el alamisation' ('Long live globalisation'), a French rendering of the Arabic word 'aalam' (world) and can be read as a subversion of 'Tahia el Djazair' (Viva Algeria), a patriotic theme. Then an intertitle emerges, white characters on black, in Standard Arabic: 'to extend a border into another territory is to make war'. This originates

[431] Nora Bouaouina, 'Alger à travers sa ''houma'': formation et déformation des espaces identitaires communautaires de quartier', *Esprit Critique*, 10.1 (2007) <http://espritcritique.uiz.ac.ma/publications/1001/esp10 01article03.pdf> [accessed 4 February 2017].
[432] Kamel Rarrbo, 'La galère de la jeunesse algérienne', *Agora débats/jeunesses*, 10 (1997), 117- 128 (p. 125) <http://www.persee.fr/docAsPDF/agora_1268-5666_1997_num_10_1_1573.pdf> [accessed 2 February 2017].
[433] Ibid.

from the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904), who regarded borders as expressions of the power of the state.[434] Often used in silent films, intertitles do not fit into the general categorization of dialogue (diegetic) or exposition (non-diegetic).[435] They directly address the audience, so the irruption of this meta-text adds a political reading to Kamel's words: the intertitle is ironic because Kamel's intention is not to make war but to travel, and even to take all of Algeria with him. The intertitle is a direct intrusion of the director as he invites the viewer to reflect on the meaning of leaving one's country. Téguia suggests that a borderless world would allow peaceful circulation. His choice of Standard Arabic for the translation – rather than *darija* – conveys the ability of this language otherwise associated with nationalism to engage with other languages and lends gravitas to the quotation.

Yet Zina questions globalisation. Why can merchandise travel but not Algerians? Kamel reminds her that the word 'Arab' means being 'on the move'. Kamel recites, in a mixture of *darija* and Standard Arabic, Emma Lazarus's poem inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty: 'Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door'.[436] This scene from *Roma ouella n'touma* is reminiscent of another, in *Casanegra*, when Karim tries to lift a statue of justice that has folded eyes and a scale, outside an antique shop. Wanting to help Asma, the shop's owner with whom he is in love, Karim struggles, and fails, to lift the heavy statue, symbolising his lack of mobility and thus the injustice of Moroccan society.

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[434] Friedrich Ratzel, *Politische Geographie* (München: Oldenbourg, 1897), cited in Charles Becquet, *L'Ethnie française d'Europe* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1963), p. 46.
[435] Sarah Berry, 'Rethinking Intertitles: The Voice and Temporality of Lyric Intertitles in *The Cry of the Children*', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 42.4 (2014), 594-608 (p. 594).
[436] Emma Lazarus, 'The New Colossus', Poetry Foundation website <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46550/the-new-colossus> [accessed 18 February 2017].

In *Roma ouella n'touma*, Zina challenges Kamel's optimistic view of America by citing Kafka's menacing characterization of the Statue of Liberty. Kamel (possibly not knowing who Kafka was) replies jokingly: 'He must have been refused a visa in order to write that'. Although Kamel and Zina are not free to travel, the geographical limitations are overcome through words and citations. Kamel and Zina can still discuss and dream of the possibility of travel. They use *darija*, in this instance, to combine local and global culture and to discover new modalities of self-expression. Zina and Kamel borrow from the different linguistic resources available to them – which include *darija*, Standard Arabic, and foreign literature – to manoeuvre within the very limited space that they are afforded in society. They resist restrictions on their freedom through their use of language.

A second intertitle occurs after two unidentified young men are shown in a print shop, one standing still against a machine in the foreground, the other in the background folding papers. On a black background in white letters appears the following in Standard Arabic: 'Not to be missed! Young country, very little used'. Téguia transposed these words from street graffiti: like the repurposing of the football chant, Téguia appropriated youthful vernacular into the film.[437] Yet the placard occurs in a moment of boredom and indicates the youths' frustration. The young men will later write a *jihadi* speech. The suggestion is that the enforced idleness of young people is one element that leads them to Islamist ideology.

It is not only Standard Arabic that appears on screen. At another moment, a cigarette seller breaks the fourth wall and approaches the camera with a homemade sign on which is written in *darija*, 'I am alive; am I seen?' He then speaks, also in *darija*, 'I am alive, alive, and well'. Austin described this scene as the emergence of

[437] Vidal, 'Entretien avec Tariq Téguia', p. 172.

the 'subaltern', analysing it in the framework of Ranjana Khanna's 'conceptualisation of postcolonial melancholia as "subaltern interruptions"'.[438] Austin argues that the cigarette seller's appearance 'posits a melancholic resistance that goes beyond the Freudian "crushed state" of the Algerian masses to express Khanna's critical melancholia'.[439] Austin's suggestion is that after the young people's protests in 1988, Algerian youth lived in a state of 'melancholia' and crushed hope. However, this is evidently over-general; 'Algerian youth' did not live only in melancholy. Zina and Kamel display energy and a vivid spirit. They express longings and demands that are more than melancholia and are proof that they want to live and exist as individuals.

Téguia describes Standard Arabic as it has been imposed by Algerian authorities as 'novlangue', an allusion to George Orwell's 'newspeak' in *1984*, where the imposed language reduces the vocabulary and the possibility of free thought.[440] However, Téguia does not entirely reject Standard Arabic; rather, he repurposes it to signal how this official language can be used for ends opposed to its official status (for example, how it can translate foreign poetry). He also seeks to prove that Standard Arabic can co-exist with *darija* – that one does not exclude the other, as is often the case in the media.

Standard Arabic, in *Roma ouella n'touma,* is also associated with Algerian society's Islamisation. It is heard twice in the diegesis: once via religious dogma on a radio; and again, when a young man is writing a religious speech in a print shop, to call for *jihad*. In the former instance, as a young man walks into a café, a sound can be heard in the background from a television programme, involving a speech by a

[438] Austin, *Algerian National Cinema*, p. 137.
[439] Ibid.
[440] Vidal, 'Entretien avec Tariq Téguia', p. 170.

cheikh (a religious cleric). A conversation between men is dealing with women's issues. The cheikh forbids women to wear nail polish: he spits out its French name, 'vernis', as though it was the name of the devil. He also forbids a woman from visiting her sister's husband in her sister's absence, because the woman might end up marrying him in the event of divorce or death. These conversations occur in the background, yet they signal the increasing conservatism of attitudes, as well as the intrusion of these talk shows into daily life.

The young man in the print shop is writing a speech to encourage *jihad*. He corrects his text and is attentive to the power of the words. The scene is theatrical: the young man, filmed from a distance, rehearses the text that he convinces himself to believe in. Téguia implies that Standard Arabic, in this context, can be twisted to express Islamist ideology. It can easily intrude into everyday life and influence young people's thought. Kamel and Zina, however, mock this Islamic discourse. They give themselves nicknames such as 'ghanima' غنيمة ('spoils of war') and 'zariaat el irhab' زريعة الارهاب ('terrorist seed'). Their humour demonstrates how young people can also subvert Islamist ideology.

Casanegra's protagonists deal differently with Islamism. For them, the ideology is a means for clerics to exert control over people. Adil tells Karim that he wants to leave Morocco because he is fed up with the moral issues plaguing Moroccan society. Adil is unable to speak French or Standard Arabic; *darija* allows him to freely criticise Moroccan society. These opinions are rarely represented in any official discourse. Therefore, the film provides an image of Moroccan society that contests the official portrayal of the city as moral and a capitalist success. Subsequent scenes in the streets of Casablanca will prove Adil's words true, with male and female prostitutes, family disputes and beggars. The only thing that can

'clean' Adil is escape to Malmö and his fantasy wedding to a blonde Norwegian woman, revealed in a dream sequence. The whiteness of his fantasy bride, dressed in a white dress, contrasts with the dark night and street. She appears as salvation, with his arguing family now apparently pacified, and his mother and stepfather attending his wedding.

The young people's rejection of religious hypocrisy in *Casanegra* is symbolised when Karim exposes the hypocrisy of an exploitative factory owner who has earned the religious title of *hadj*. In a medium close-up behind a window, keeping his distance from the factory and the workers, the man is having a phone conversation in *darija*, in which he is clearly bribing a politician. Karim arrives, ready to confront the *hadj*, angry at receiving only 50 dirhams (less than 4 euros) for his day at work. Karim is filmed in a long shot surrounded by boxes, centrally framed and alone, which lends to him a momentary symbolic power. The *hadj* responds in vulgar *darija*, telling Karim to 'fuck off'. But Karim has the last word when, as he is leaving the job behind, he shouts back, 'go to the *hammam* and clean yourself from all the dirt you are doing'. Karim rejects the *hadj*'s religious hypocrisy and exploitation by verbally demeaning his morality; *darija* allows Karim to do so (rather than using standard Arabic which would evoke religious precepts).

Conscious as they are of the city's moral darkness, Adil and Karim's rejection of polite language in *Casanegra* is connected with their rejection of upper-class lifestyles and morals. This is made clear when the two young men are sent by Zrirek to collect money from a man who turns out to be a transvestite. Adil and Karim's social exclusion is constructed through a subtle staging of binary oppositions, such as the difference between the small apartments where their families live and the luxurious villa of the transvestite. The latter is decorated with

African art and Western furniture and is completely disconnected from Adil and Karim's everyday lives, associated with traditional Moroccan furniture. The bright light and whiteness of the walls of the villa further contrast with the dim light in Adil and Karim's homes.

When Adil and Karim enter his house uninvited, the man films them with his camera. We as viewers are momentarily made the transvestite's accomplices as we view Adil and Karim through his lens. They are blurred, as if unreal; the man puts them at distance, physically and symbolically, as he speaks to them in French. Then he switches to *darija* to repeatedly address the two as *khorot*, which designates in *darija* someone 'dumb', 'stupid', from an 'under-class'. While Karim wants to keep the encounter peaceful, it is only when the man addresses them in *darija* as 'ouled ezenka' ('street boys') that Karim beats him. Karim's violence replaces language – neither Karim nor Adil can speak French.

The film offers a disturbing justification of the protagonists' violence against the transvestite, involving a disconcerting attitude towards gender. Because the transvestite has mocked him in French, Karim beats the man, and when he falls on the floor it is revealed that he is wearing women's underwear. The scene therefore associates French with a feminised, or even perverted, social status. The transvestite is meant to portray a loss of morals and masculinity in a wealthy context. Karim's gesture is thus constructed as a class-based and masculine revenge, whereby his use of *darija* triumphs over the upper classes.

After the encounter, Adil describes the transvestite a '*sheikha*'. *Sheikhates* are women who sing, dance, and whose services are highly prized in Casablanca and

its region, both in family celebrations and popular cabarets.[441] Although their musical repertoire is recognized as an integral part of Moroccan cultural heritage, these women have a bad reputation and are often considered, or even treated, as prostitutes, as they operate in essentially male, nocturnal spaces. By associating the transvestite with a *sheikha*, Adil regains his power over the man who insulted him in French and asserts his masculinity, with a touch of homophobia.

While at the transvestite's luxurious villa, Adil finds money and steals it, while Karim takes an expensive suit. With his suit, Karim enters an exclusive nightclub where he meets Asma, the antique shop owner who mainly speaks French, and the two engage in a one-night romance. When Karim visits Asma's shop the next day, street boys working for him shout at him in *darija*, asking him for more cigarettes to sell and commenting on Asma, 'your girlfriend is hot'. While Karim chases the boys, Asma is pushed into a car by her female friend who repeats in French 'mais monte je te dis'. Karim's inability to speak French coupled with his social status separate him from Asma.

French, on the other hand, in *Roma ouella n'touma*, is used in the same manner as the intertitles: as interruptions of the complex political context. Commenting on the politics of the time, Merzak, the baker who has welcomed Zina, Malek and Kamel for the night and who is also a journalist, states 'haddhi harb thekila' ('this is a heavy war') which he translates into French as 'nous vivons une guerre lente'. One of the two young men who works at the print shop wears a green shirt with a French Sonatrach logo, the state oil company. On Algeria's flag, green symbolises Islam (as well as the land), while Sonatrach has been surrounded by

[441] Souad Azizi, 'Casa ciné-cité: images de Casablanca dans le cinéma (Maroc)', *Synoptique*, 4.1 (2015), 105-137 (p. 127).

various embezzlement scandals. The young man wearing this shirt is associated with racketeering and Islamist ideology. In another scene, when Malek reads the newspapers in French, two ads are shown in close-up: one for Halliburton's expansion in Algeria; another for CV-writing services. Halliburton, a US company, was involved with Sonatrach in a bribery and corruption scandal. Kamel reads *Le Matin,* a newspaper that has been censored and not distributed in Algeria since 2004.[442] French is thus the language of business; it is also the language used in the papers that reveal political scandals and challenge state authority.

In *Casanegra*, social class is marked by the division between *darija* and French. English has fewer class connotations. For that reason, Karim gives his sister an Oxford English Dictionary to help her learn. For him, the dictionary – which his sister treats as a vital commodity – serves as a kind of fetish to protect her not from evil but from poverty. English will be important for Adil if he is to leave Morocco for Norway in search of a better life. Unfortunately, none of the characters speak English, the language that promises social improvement outside of Morocco. Although Kamel can cite English poetry translated into *darija*, he does not speak English; only the policeman they met who cites Henry James speaks it: English has not yet reached Algeria's poorest people.

I suggested that *Casanegra* and *Roma ouella n'touma* are unrealistic in terms of plot, but realistic in their use of language. In both cases, the characters prefer urban, street language to any other language, which signals not only their detachment from official language but also their turn to a more vernacular language. *Casanegra* rejects polite language and turns instead to a vulgar, slang-heavy version

[442] *Le Matin* was founded in 1991 by Mohammed Benchicou in 1991, who was close to the political party *Parti d'Avant-Garde Socialiste* (PAGS, former Algerian communist Party). Benchicou was imprisoned in 2004 after publishing a book on the Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

of *darija* to accompany the experience of injustice. The film represents a generation of frustrated young Moroccans who are neither heroes nor villains, and there is no attempt to make them likeable. In *Roma ouella n'touma*, the use of *darija* is also a political gesture; it allows the young protagonists to articulate their daily frustrations and their desire for freedom, their individual consciousness as well as their rejection of Islamic ideologies.

'We are Not Like You': Youth and Islamic Terrorism

The 2013 Doha Film Festival awarded the Best Director prize to Nabil Ayouch for *Les Chevaux de Dieu* (2012) and Best Arab film to *Le Repenti* (Dir. Merzak Allouache, 2012). These prizes reflected an increased interest in the figure of the Islamic terrorist in North Africa in 2012. *Le Repenti* tells the story of a young Algerian man returning to normal life after living in a terrorist camp. *Les Chevaux de Dieu* examines the motivations of the young male suicide bombers who carried out coordinated attacks in Casablanca on 16 May 2003. These attacks, in which forty-five people died, targeted a Jewish cemetery, a Jewish community centre, an international hotel, and Spanish- and Italian-owned restaurants.

Les Chevaux de Dieu is a vivid film with upbeat parts whereas *Le Repenti* is more reflective, with little dialogue. *Le Repenti* positions Islamic terrorists as part of society, while *Les Chevaux de Die*u points towards their ideological and linguistic distinctiveness. In the latter film, the young men appropriate religious language to assert themselves and create their own social milieu, but this cuts them off from the broader society they inhabit. In *Le Repenti*, religious language is absent: all the characters use *darija*, and so the terrorist is indistinguishable linguistically from the rest of Algerian society.

Les Chevaux de Dieu: 'Paradise is Ours…Not Yours'

Les Chevaux de Dieu exposes the harsh living conditions for young men in Sidi Moumen, a shanty town five kilometres from Casablanca. The narrative begins in 1994 and follows Tarek – nicknamed Yachine after the Russian footballer Lev Yashin – his brother Hamid and his best friend Nabil. They pass their time with football, small-time drug trafficking, and verbal and sexual abuse. One night, Hamid sexually abuses Nabil to assert his power as the group's leader. By 1999, Hamid has become a drug dealer and his family's breadwinner. After throwing a stone at a police car, he is sentenced to two years in prison. By the time he has come out of prison he has become a fundamentalist and starts to associate with an Islamic Brotherhood.

Meanwhile, Yachine works with Nabil at the local garage. One evening, the garage owner Ba' Moussa, a libidinous old man, makes a move on Nabil. Yachine hits Ba' Moussa on the back of the head, which he thinks kills him, although Yachine sees Ba' Moussa's body moving again so he violently hits him again, eventually killing Ba' Moussa. Nabil seeks Hamid's help to get rid of the body, and he enlists the help of other 'brothers'. Subsequently, Yachine, Nabil and another friend, Fouad, gradually join the Islamic group. Abu Zubeir is the spiritual leader of the young men, who are prepared for suicide bombing by one of their 'brothers', Ziad.

Les Chevaux de Dieu is Ayouch's fifth feature film. It aims for a 'realistic' depiction of the events behind Casablanca's terrorist attacks, filmed from the

'inside'.[443]Ayouch spent two years in preparation, during which time he interviewed political scientists, sociologists and inhabitants of Sidi Moumen who knew the terrorists.[444] To achieve a realistic effect, Ayouch filmed on location in a shanty town similar to the original one. He employed non-professional actors – the two lead actors, brothers in the film, are themselves brothers from Sidi Moumen – and he paid attention to language and Islamic attitudes.[445] While the script is adapted from Mahi Binebine's Moroccan novel, originally written in French, *Les Étoiles de Sidi Moumen* (2010), Ayouch worked with script writer Jamel Belmahi to change the language of the novel. [446] Ayouch also enlisted the services of Reda Benotmane, who was previously imprisoned for 'apology for terrorism', to advise him on religious gestures – for example, of men praying – religious costume, and the correct way to deliver a religious speech.[447] Ayouch gathered 3 million euros to produce the film, a significant budget for a Moroccan feature, the effects of which are evident in the cinematography and in particular the aerial views.[448]

[443] Jihane Bougrine, 'Nabil Ayouch: j'espère qu'il y aura de la place pour un débat serein', *Les Eco*, 9 February 2013 <http://www.maghress.com/fr/lesechos/29614> [accessed 28 February 2017].
[444] Ibid.
[445] Fatima El Ouafi, 'Les ''Kamikazes'' de Ayouch triomphent à Cannes', *L'Économiste*, 29 May 2012 <https://www.leconomiste.com/article/894953-les-kamikazes-de-ayouch-triomphent-cannes> [accessed 7 March 2017].
[446] Ibid.
[447] 'Les bidonvilles ne sont pas des nids à kamikazes', *Le Soir Échos*, 30 April 2012 <http://www.maghress.com/fr/lesoir/50509> [accessed 6 March 2017].
[448] 'Cinéma. ''Les chevaux de Dieu'' de Nabil Ayouch représente le Maroc au festival de Cannes', *Tourisme News*, 23 April 2012 <https://www.thrmagazine.info/Cinema-Les-chevaux-de-Dieu-de-Nabil-Ayouch-represente-le-Maroc-au-festival-de-Cannes_a407.html> [accessed 6 March 2017].

Figure 21. *Les Chevaux de Dieu*'s poster (title in French and Arabic)

Language, lighting, framing and mise-en-scène play crucial roles in representing the young men's ideological changes. Lighting and camera movement in the first part of the film reflect the vibrancy of childhood. These scenes are mainly filmed with a moving camera: a system was fabricated with four metallic arms, so the camera was flexible and allowed more sequences of movement such as the young boys playing football.[449] The light is bright, and the rhythm is energetic between violent football games and play. The language is *darija*, with swear words and sexual allusions from the children and adults. The second part of the film is dimly lit, mostly in interiors, and medium shots serve to distance the viewer from the events while enhancing the unity of the Islamic Brotherhood who live in an enclosed parallel universe. *Darija* is now mixed with Classical Arabic and religious discourse; this shift in language as well as costume signals the Islamisation of the young protagonists.

In the second part of the film, Nabil and Yachine no longer dress in t-shirts and jeans, but mainly in long Islamic robes, and they have beards. They no longer

[449] 'Interview with Nabil Ayouch', *Les Chevaux de Dieu* DVD release, 2013.

smoke joints, they stop listening to the rai song 'Jouni marre' (the Arabisation of J'en ai marre), and a poster of the Bollywood actress Aishwarya Rai is replaced by a piece of fabric, with black and white motifs, similar to what religious men wear on their head. Yachine is renamed Tarek by Ziad, to remove the foreign influence of his nickname. The young men also learn to repeat religious idioms, and gradually use fewer expletives in *darija*, which makes their language more polished. They still belong to the community, but they become more isolated from their neighbours: no longer attending football games or hanging out smoking joints, they stay behind closed doors and have less contact with their families. These youths build a new community under Abu Zubeir's influence and find new ways to express themselves and behave.

Abu Zubeir's mastery of Standard Arabic and religious rhetoric gives him authority in the community; he is the spiritual leader to be obeyed. His religious influence is enhanced by costume, make-up, lighting, and language. He is an austere figure, dressed in black Islamic clothes with a long robe, a hat and a beard. His eyes are painted with kohl: Salafi men use kohl following the Prophet Mohammed's advice. His room is filled with shelves of religious books, written in Arabic, which accentuate his literacy and religious knowledge. The young men pray and attend religious speeches in a house that is kept secret from the other inhabitants of the slum. They sit on the floor in a dimly lit room, austerely furnished with only some framed Islamic calligraphy. This austerity seems like a choice, whereas elsewhere in the shanty town, it is an inevitability, and the Brotherhood have created a protected space with greater privilege than the boys are used to.

Abu Zubeir belongs to the Salafi Wahabi movement, evident in his calls for martyrdom. Salaf means 'ancestors' or 'origins' and the scholar Quintan

Wiktorowicz defines the Salafi movement as a return to an 'original' Islam that strictly follows the 'Quran, the Sunna (*hadith*) [path or traditions of the Prophet Mohammed] and the consensus of the companions [companions of the Prophet who learned Islam directly from him]. All behaviour must be sanctioned by these religious sources'.[450] The Salafi movement is characterised by ideas of Islamic purity and rejection of Western influence and local customs. Richard Gauvain explains that 'Salafi identity is firmly rooted in the language of *jihad* and its attendant discourses (resistance, suffering, and martyrdom)'.[451]

Jihad is a word used by the Salafi to define a holy war against Infidels, and the 'Salafi jihadists justify their radical definition of *jihad* as a military struggle between Muslims and infidels by citing the duty to emulate the Prophet Mohammed'.[452] Therefore, selective citations from the Quran and the hadith serve to 'emphasise the merits or need to wage a military struggle'.[453] Wiktorowicz observes that, in their communication, the Salafi 'refuse any infiltration of foreign words into the language' and that 'tone, the fluctuating pitch and tenor of speech patterns, and the learned Classical Arabic all combine to create a religious experience that ties the religious message to an emotive dimension'.[454]

Abu Zubeir's discourse is inspired by Salafi jihadi rhetoric. He denounces the depravation of Moroccan society, the corruption of the '*makhzen'* (the Moroccan state), and the Imperialist, Zionist crusade to destroy the Islamic nation (a recurrent

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[450] Quintan Wiktorowicz, 'A Genealogy of Radical Islam', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 28.2 (2005), 75-97 (p. 75).
[451] Richard Gauvain, 'Be Careful What You Wish For: Spotlight on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Organizations after the Uprising', *Political Theology*, 12.2 (2011), 173-179 (p. 176).
[452] Assaf Moghadem, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 101.
[453] Ibid.
[454] Wiktorowicz, 'A Genealogy of Radical Islam', p. 76.

theme in Osama Bin Laden's speech when he issued a fatwa against 'Jews and Crusaders' in 1998).[455] Abu Zubeir uses the theme of '*tawhid*' (unity of God) to argue that loyalty is due only to God, not to the neighbourhood or to the state. The Salafi extend *tawhid* to a 'rejection of man-made laws as they are an interference with the word and will of God'.[456] Abu Zubeir also insists on the trans-nationalism of this combat, so the young men are exposed to videos, songs and speeches from Osama Bin Laden. The image of a victimised Muslim community is reinforced through videos of Muslim men and women chased from their houses by armed forces – likely in Chechnya.

In his argumentative and emotional speeches, Abu Zubeir mixes Classical Arabic with *darija* as well as religious citations from the Quran and *hadiths*. He is aware that the young men do not speak Classical Arabic, because Classical Arabic is a written language (and they do not seem to have been to school). He thus uses *darija* to establish a connection but throws in some Classical Arabic to impress and affect his listeners. The first speech that Abu Zubeir addresses to the young men reassures them that they will find 'peace of mind' and become stronger if they join the Brotherhood. Abu Zubeir kneels down to their level to create a physical and psychological proximity. He also uses *darija* to encourage Tarek to forget about the murder of Ba' Moussa, implying that it is the corrupt society that pushed him to commit the deed.

Abu Zubeir is often off-camera, so that it is only his words that are heard, which Tarek remembers and mulls over. When Abu Zubeir gives his speech in the dimly lit room, the camera focuses on the rapt expression, stillness, and attention of

[455] Moghadem, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, p. 69.
[456] Ibid., pp. 95-96.

Nabil, Hamid, and Yachine. His speech even continues as a voice-over as they leave the house, signalling that his words are lingering and resonating with the young men. Nabil is conscious of Abu Zubeir's powerful language, which he describes in *darija* as 'hadartou ouaara' (powerful speech).

Abu Zubeir's rhetoric strengthens the culture of death and martyrdom amongst the young men. Before their mission, an unidentified emir comes to the house and delivers a speech that reinforces the message of martyrdom. He tells Hamid, Tarek, Fouad and Nabil, as well as others, in Classical Arabic: 'Take care, children of Islam, never to become like those who cling to life down here and fear to become martyrs. Fly, horses of God, and the gates of paradise will open for you'. The expression 'horses of God' (the film's title) was used by one of the Prophet Mohammed's companions in the seventh century when calling for *jihad* and was later repeated many times by Bin Laden in his speeches.[457]

All these words and rhetoric impress the young men. The ethnologist Ouafae Mouhssine observes that 'Arabic language [in Morocco] remains inseparable from the religious dimension that characterizes the Islamist discourse'.[458] The young men repeat idioms and expressions, and include them in their daily speeches: one phrase they pick up is فتح الله و نصر ('God will ease and provide victory'). Nabil, for example, refuses to open a bag that his mother leaves for him in the house (she is a singer and prostitute who left the neighbourhood because of religious zealots and the rise of conservative morality). He even refuses to see her, uttering a religious saying that مهر البغي حرام ('the prostitute's dowry money is illegal').

[457] Dennis West and Joan M. West, 'Becoming a Suicide Bomber. An Interview with Nabil Ayouch', *Cinéaste*, 39.4 (2014), 22-25 (p. 22).
[458] Ouafae Mouhssine, 'Ambivalence du discours sur l'arabisation', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language,* 112.1 (1995), 45-62 (p. 48).

The change in linguistic tone is also noticeable in Hamid and Tarek. At their home, their father simply sits around all day, repeating 'naam ya sidi, ouakha sidi' ('Yes Sir, of course Sir') as a remembrance of his years of work and subservience. Their brother, Said, has learning disabilities; he listens to football games and the news on the radio in Arabic, French and English, and is filmed inside the house, unable to get out. Hamid asks him to listen to some religious cassettes he brought him from Mecca, which enhances their sacredness. Tarek also asks Said not to shave because it is a sign of femininity. Religious attire combined with religious language, procures Tarek some authority over the family, even if Tarek is only able to utter a few religious expressions, indicating that he is unable to fully master religious language.

Figure 22. Tarek, Nabil, Hamid and Fouad (from left to right) at Ziad's house

After being chosen for the operation, the young men accompany Ziad to a training camp in the mountains. This is to alienate them from their normal environment, and to give them a taste of 'Paradise'. The mountains are green and wild, and in stark contrast with the shanty town from which the men were unable to escape. Long shots show the appealing landscape, and the young men joyously swim

in the river and play football. When they leave for a training camp, Fouad happily declares that it will be his first trip to Casablanca. When they are in the minivan and passing by rich neighbourhoods in the city, Ziad observes the possessions of the rich: their clean environment with pavements, greenery, clean cars, women walking by; all these elements resemble the telenovelas Tarek's mother watches on television.

Ziad uses *darija* to emotionally engage the young men: he declares that these rich people obtained their wealth through exploiting young men like themselves. Ziad declares that 'they will burn in Hell', while the young men will be rewarded after death. The scene illustrates the disconnection between the rich and the poor of Casablanca. Ziad is also quick to suppress any doubts in the young men's minds. When two of them, gathered in a kitchen, discuss the mission, they recognise that there will be Muslims in the places they will attack. Ziad cuts them short and declares that those Muslims who drink are مرتدين ('apostates'); thus, it is licit to kill them as long as it facilitates the killing of Christians and Jews too. Religious discourse is used to remove the men's empathy with those whom they will bomb.

Only Khalil, Nabil and Tarek's friend, resists the religious discourse. He mocks the self-defence class that Ziad gives them, stating 'this is not an action movie', and does not join the others in prayer. Soon, he is no longer present at their gatherings in Nabil's house, apparently by choice. Khalil also mentions that he works with his father who will help him to defend himself in times of need. This remark makes clear the role the Brotherhood plays: they replace a patriarchal authority, and even play the role of the state to educate, employ and aid.

Nabil, Fouad and Tarek live together communally. Nabil cooks while Fouad irons. Women are excluded, and the genders are separated. Tarek has been in love with Fouad's sister, Ghizlane, since childhood, but he cannot declare his love as he

only meets her for short intervals. The night before the suicide attacks (and in the credits), Tarek wonders how Ghizlane will react when she hears he has become a martyr. Hence, Tarek's motivations for martyrdom are blurred: there is the religious influence, but also the quest for social recognition, which he cannot receive. Nabil, who was raped by Hamid when he was young, is seen holding his mother's lipstick and wanting to kiss Tarek. When he becomes religious, however, he represses his homosexual desires. Ziad tells him, 'you became a real man'. Through religious behaviour, Nabil obliterates his sexual desires.

In the film, aerial shots of the shanty town reveal corrugated steel roofs and narrow, labyrinthine streets: an endless city. These shots enhance the feeling of isolation and suggest that there is no way out of the shanty town. These young men live on the margins of Moroccan society, both geographically and economically, politically powerless and socially isolated. Religious practice and language empower the young men, providing them with a sense of purpose and a place in the community, previously lacking. However, this newly found language also removes them from social life: literally, as they kill themselves, to say nothing of their victims. Religious language simultaneously affirms their social existence and alienates them from society.

'I Am Not Your Brother': *Le Repenti* or the Impossible Reconciliation

Le Repenti is one of the few Algerian films to deal with the consequences of the Black Decade and the program of 'national reconciliation' aimed at pardoning and reintegrating into civic life all those who had taken up arms but surrendered to the

police, and who were not convicted of blood crimes.[459] These people were known as 'les repentis'. Allouache wrote the script after he was inspired by a story that he read in an Algerian newspaper. He shot the film in El Bayadh, a town in the highlands of Algeria, located 500 kilometres south west of Algiers.

Figure 23. *Le Repenti*'s poster (title in French and Arabic)

Le Repenti has a slow rhythm, including long shots of a dry and rough natural landscape in El Bayadh. Dialogue between the characters is scarce, and silence permeates the film. All the characters speak *darija* which combined with silence articulate the lack of dialogue between Algerians that was a paradoxical consequence of this process of national reconciliation; and represent the failure of national reconciliation and the enduring trauma of the Black Decade. The protagonists cannot overcome that which separates them, and they represent those who continued to find it difficult to express their anger and reconcile with both their own pasts and the new nation.

[459] Miriam R. Lowi, *Oil Wealth and the Poverty of Politics: Algeria Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 137.

Le Repenti opens with a young man, Rachid, running from the terrorist camp he left, on a snowy day through the mountains to reach his village. The villagers react to him with hostility, because they believe he has taken part in terrorist attacks. Rachid leaves the village for a nearby town and surrenders himself to the police. In light of the law of national reconciliation, the commissioner provides him with a job as a waiter at a local café in exchange for information. Meanwhile, Lakhdar, a pharmacist, spends his nights drinking red wine and watching television. Rachid contacts him by phone and offers a deal to which Lakhdar agrees.

Rachid had heard of Lakhdar's daughter when he was in the terrorist camp and knows that she has been abducted and killed. He offers to take him to the place where the daughter is buried in exchange for money. One night, visiting his parents at his village, Rachid is attacked by a villager. He retaliates and, after a struggle, kills him. The next day, Lakhdar, his ex-wife Djamila and Rachid embark by car to the daughter's tomb. Meanwhile, the villager's body is found and the police commissioner seeks Rachid for the murder. When Rachid, Djamila and Lakhdar arrive at the tomb, Djamila cries and laments. Men holding guns approach, dressed like Rachid when he deserted, and the film ends up with a long shot of the hill where the protagonists are, accompanied by gunshots and shouts of 'Allah Akbar' (Allah is Great). The ending implies the death of the protagonists at the hands of the terrorists.

Allouache was given 90,000 euros from the Doha film festival award for his previous feature *Normal!*, and obtained further funding from the *Fonds Sud Cinéma* from the French CNC.[460] The exterior locations reveal a harsh and barren environment, El Bayedh is filmed in the winter, in cold light, with long shots that

[460] 'Films sélectionnés au Festival de Cannes (16 au 26 mai 2012) soutenus par le CNC', CNC website <http://www.cnc.fr/web/fr/dernieres-actualites/-/liste/18/1767639> [accessed 13 April 2017].

reveal broken pavements, unfinished buildings, and dirt – on the horizon, steep and arid hills. Allouache succeeded in rendering a dry, gloomy ambiance by long shots of nature as well as close-ups of the protagonists' faces to heighten their expression, tracking their frustration, pain, silence and outbursts. Furthermore, music (diegetic or non-diegetic) is quasi absent from the film, which accentuates the harshness and roughness of the situation in which the protagonists live.

The interiors offer little comfort. Lakhdar's flat is neglected, with pigeons nesting on the balcony and empty bottles of wine piled up next to the sink. The flat is empty because Lakhdar has removed anything that might remind him of his previous married life before his daughter had been abducted, except for the books and his daughter's music box stashed in cupboards. Djamila observes that his curtains are merely net curtains, implying he should have proper curtains and live in a proper house.

To further isolate himself, Lakhdar immerses himself in another language, Chinese, when he watches television. On several occasions, the camera assumes his perspective as he watches. This is to highlight the fact that Lakhdar is oblivious to what is around him: he is in a world of his own. Chinese language television programs provide a space, as does drinking, in which Lakhdar can retreat from reality and forget the events he has experienced. Lakhdar's psychological emptiness is paralleled by the emptiness of his flat, in which he sits on the floor.

The Algerian journalist Soltane understands the scene when Lakhdar watches Chinese television as Allouache denigrating Algerian television. She writes, Allouache conveys the message: 'Je préfère regarder la télévision chinoise que de

regarder la télévision algérienne'.[461] Soltane adds that French journalists present at the premiere in Cannes wondered if there was such a thing as Algerian television.[462] Soltane has missed the point about Lakhdar's desire to isolate himself: he does not reject Algerian television, but he rejects his surroundings. Yet Soltane's comments do correspond with the pattern for Algerian journalists, when discussing Algerian films, to require that the films conform to their own, politically-charged views. Her remark implies that Algerian films should reflect Algeria uncritically, or even praise it, and not include foreign languages.

Lakhdar's consumption of television differs from that of Rachid, who is framed watching soaps dubbed in Syrian Arabic or comedies from the Arabic Persian Gulf. These are the few moments when Rachid smiles and laughs as would any other ordinary young man in his early twenties. Television reconnects Rachid to feelings of joy and it is in a language he understands, although it is not *darija* but Middle Eastern Arabic (a fact that was not criticized by the Algerian press). Rachid, like Lakhdar, uses a different language to reconnect with joy and forget about his daily life. *Darija* becomes the language of trauma, associated with the violence that each of the protagonists has endured – as well as the violence that Rachid has inflicted.

Once he has returned from the terrorist camp, of which he does not talk much, Rachid gradually changes. He follows the opposite path to Tarek in *Les Chevaux de Dieu*: he shaves his beard, dresses in jeans and even gazes at a passing girl. Yet Rachid is isolated in his new life, filmed with close-ups while his still expression conveys mystery and does not reveal much about him or his state of

[461] Soltane, 'Merzak Allouache remplace l'ENTV par la CCTV 4', *L'Expression*, 22 May 2012 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/lexpression/154073> [accessed 28 March 2017].
[462] Ibid.

mind. In the café where Rachid works, the café owner and a customer reveal the resentment they hold towards him. They mock the way Rachid stares at a girl passing by the café and the customer adds that he and people like him should be shot. Rachid is separated from the two men in the shot, further insisting on his isolation and their difficulty in seeing him as a 'normal' man.

The film questions whether meaningful communication is possible between these characters. Hence, while *darija* is the shared language, it is also the dividing language as communication becomes impossible between Rachid and the others; but not because of the language. The café owner, Si Salah, an old man, indicates to Rachid that he does not want to deal with him because he does not like his 'sort' – that is, the 'repentant'. After Rachid's first day at the café and in an exchange when Si Salah shows Rachid his small room; the latter thanks him in *darija*, calling him *akhi* (brother), to which Si Salah replies in *darija*, 'I am not your brother and I will never be'. Similarly, Djamila bursts out at Rachid when he uses the word 'akhi' in the car when referring to one of the terrorists; Djamila strongly objects and hits him. The word, as in *Les Chevaux de Dieu*, designates a faith-based community, yet it became used primarily by Islamic groups; hence, the religious connotation is refused by the other characters. They reject the vocabulary that Rachid acquired while he was in the terrorist camp, and by rejecting his words, they reject what he represents.

Interestingly, the vocabulary is taken from the *mujahidin* in Algeria: the 'brother', the 'maquis', *jebal*. Luis Martinez correctly observes that the language of a war of liberation used by the Islamists – such as words like *jihad* –has 'simply been poured into moulds already used by the nationalists during the war of

liberation'.[463] Martinez argues that the ideology of the Islamists was unclear and void 'in the absence of political experience', which in turn reveals 'the emptiness of Islamism as an original ideological movement'.[464] The Algerian war is not the only historical event remembered by the film. Djamila goes through Lakhdar's cupboards and stares at a book, *Cahier noir d'octobre*, which recalls the events of October 1988 in Algeria. It describes the torture of the young people who participated in the protests across different Algerian cities. This glimpse into the past reveals other unresolved moments of violence in Algerian history.

Silence plays an important role in the film in rendering the inner violence and the anxiety of the protagonists. Helen Ferguson argues that 'once sound has become the norm in film, its absence is unexpected and therefore significant, thus making silence a powerful element'.[465] Allouache seeks to represent the violence that stems from non-communication. Gathered in the flat, Lakhdar and Djamila fail to talk; they often halt mid-sentence, overwhelmed by their emotions. Sentences are unfinished and the audience's sense of their emotion at being brought together and remembering their daughter is heightened by an unstable camera and close-ups.

When Djamila, Rachid and Lakhdar are in the car, in a confined space, silence and speech combine to translate the failure of communication and reconciliation. Outside the car, the open road is deserted, and the light is warm; a striking contrast to the confined interor space. Yet the beauty of the landscape, as in *Barakat!*, only heightens the tragic situation. At first, Djamila is silent. As she sits in

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[463] Luis Martinez, *The Algerian Civil War 1990-1998,* trans. by Jonathan Derrick (London: Hurst in association with the Centre d'Études et de Recherches Internationales, 2000), p. 251.
[464] Ibid.
[465] Helen Ferguson, 'Silence and Shrieks: Language in Three Films by Kira Muratova', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 83.1 (2005), 38-70 (p. 49).

the back of the car, her silence is full of aggression and resentment towards Rachid in the front. When Rachid asks Lakhdar to see the money he will be given, Djamila has an outburst. The shot-reverse-shot excludes Lakhdar as he drives, but Djamila violently screams at Rachid asking him how he can consider himself a Muslim while he is taking them to the tomb of her daughter.

Djamila wants to hear the whole story of what happened to her daughter, since Rachid knew one of the terrorists who abducted her (a neighbour of the family). Lakhdar prefers silence, mirroring his attitude when he watches Chinese television. When they arrive at the tomb, Djamila cries and laments, Lakhdar stands still and cries, while Rachid sits under a tree, also crying a little. This is the only occasion when Rachid betrays any emotion, though he sits by silently, as if outside of the events. This is also the only moment of communication, albeit via silence, which suggests that they are united only in their pain and sadness.

By the end of the film, violence occurs off-screen: screams and gunshots signal the tragic end and the repeating cycle of violence and death as the protagonists have seemingly been killed. The three protagonists have failed to communicate: Rachid fails to repent, it only distance them; Lakhdar fails to express his emotions, and Djamila can only scream to express her anger. Their shared language, *darija*, combined with trauma, has failed to reconcile the protagonists, even though this shared language shows that Rachid is part of Algerian society and their failure to communicate serves as a microcosm of the failure of national reconciliation

While the film received international prizes and its actors several awards, its French funding was controversial in Algeria. The debate was initiated at the *Quinzaine des Réalisateurs* selection of the 2012 Cannes film festival, when

Allouache criticized the lack of Algerian support and funding.[466] The Algerian journalist Réda asked how a non-Algerian funded film can represent Algeria in a film festival, and argued that 'En aidant, le financement d'un film algérien qui dénonce les mécanismes de la politique de la réconciliation nationale et annonçant ouvertement sa volonté de soutenir ce film refusé par l'Algérie, le CNC expose les rapports culturels entre l'Algérie et la France à de sérieux désaccords'.[467] Likewise, Soltane stated that 'Les médias français ont saisi une nouvelle fois l'occasion pour décrire l'Algérie en des mots sombres et remettre une couche sur une page du passé douloureux qui a été pourtant tournée'.[468]

The Algerian public were similarly hostile to the film. One viewer asked how Allouache could make a film out of a 'national tragedy with foreign funding'.[469] Clearly, these reactions indicate an on-going debate about funding and national cinema in Algeria, and the relation to France. It also indicates again the widespread belief that Algerian films should represent a positive image of the Algerian nation. These reactions also show that the Black Decade and its aftermath is still an arduous, complicated subject to deal with, and that national reconciliation is far from being achieved.

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[466] Réda, 'Polémique à Cannes sur le financement français des films algériens: l'ingérence du CNC', *El Moudjahid*, 20 May 2012 <http://www.elmoudjahid.com/fr/actualites/28119> [accessed 10 January 2017].
[467] Ibid.
[468] Soltane, 'Sophie Dulac entre Le Repenti algérien et La Fanfare israélienne !', *L'Expression*, 13 April 2013 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/ lexpression/172222> [accessed 12 September 2014].
[469] Mahmoud Chaal, 'Le Repenti de Merzak Allouache, en vedette. Point d'orgue des rencontres cinématographiques de Béjaia', *L'Expression*, 16 June 2012 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/lexpression/155391> [accessed 13 March 2016].

Amours voilées and *Islamour*: amour ou religion?

Of the thirty Moroccan films released in 2008, there are two whose innate similarities and differences offer a rich opportunity to investigate the relationship between religious discourse, language, gender and class. These two films are *Amours voilées* (Dir. Aziz Salmy, 2008) and *Islamour* (Dir. Saâd Chraïbi, 2008). *Amours voilées* is Salmy's first feature length film and was labelled by Moroccan religious clerics a 'shameful film'. Member of Parliament Abdelbari Zemzmi called for *Amours voilées* to be banned on television, with the assertion that the film maliciously distorted the image of the veil and of women who wear it: 'veiled women are portrayed as having sexual relations outside marriage (with the sound of the call to prayer being heard) and they even smoke the hookah during Ramadhan'.[470] *Islamour* , Chraïbi's ninth film, was on the other hand deemed unworthy of attention by some cinema critics and journalists.

Amours voilées presents a woman who has drifted from religion, while *Islamour* depicts a pious man who rejects Western values to reconnect with his 'true' self. The films share the French language, and *darija*. The use of French reflects the elevated social position of Batoul, the protagonist of *Amours voilées*, and the cosmopolitan position of Abbas's family (*Islamour*'s protagonist): his children have been educated in French schools while abroad in America, and Abbas maintains French as the language of the family home. The two films explore everyday operations of religious language, and I argue that the speakers' religious authority is derived more from their social standing than their piety and scriptural knowledge: in *Amours voilées*, religious authority is derived from socioeconomic class, while in

[470] Bilal Al Talidi, 'Ulama yantakidoun *Hijab Al Hob*', *Al Tajdid*, 9 January 2009 <http://www.maghress.com/attajdid/46984> [accessed 13 March 2015].

Islamour religious authority is linked to the patriarchal structure of the family. To illustrate the interrelation between language, social status and religious authority, I will investigate how the films' visual aspects, music, and mise-en-scène present language in its relationship to religious discourse. My analysis of religious discourse will look at the protagonists' religious opinions, daily references to religion, and use of scriptural knowledge. I will also investigate if Standard Arabic is the language of religious authority.

Amours voilées revolves around Batoul, a paediatrician, aged 28, who lives in Casablanca in her family's house with her mother, her mother's husband and his brother (Anas), who wishes to marry Batoul, and Batoul's brothers and sister. Batoul's life is divided between her work at the hospital and her time with her four female friends and her family. Batoul encounters Hamza – a divorced man who returned from France three years earlier – and a series of secret sexual encounters ensue. Batoul eventually falls pregnant and Hamza refuses his support or involvement. By the end of the film, Batoul reveals her pregnancy to her family and friends. The film finishes uncertainly without resolving the relationship between Batoul, Hamza and Anas.

Islamour revolves around Abbas who has been living with his American wife Betty and two children in the United States for over twenty-five years. It is implied from his remarks that he left the United States because he was suspected, by the state authorities and his in-laws, of being a 'terrorist' in the aftermath of the events of 9/11. Upon his return to Morocco, Abbas starts reading religious books and going to the mosque. He and his wife constantly argue about the 'clash of civilisations' – the differences between the West and Muslim countries. By the end of the film, while the family is gathered in Abbas's hometown, with his sister Ouafae and her French

boyfriend Marc, Abbas discovers that he has an illegitimate daughter, Kaltoum, who is the same age as his children. Abbas had an affair before leaving Morocco with the gardener's sister who since Abbas's departure has been kept in a psychiatric hospital. The film ends with the gardener exclaiming in *darija*: 'And you pretend to be a Muslim!'.

Amours voilées and *Islamour* portray religion as central to their protagonists' roles within the family structure and Moroccan society. The films also emphasise the central juxtaposition of love and religion at their core, as reflected in their respective titles. *Amours voilées* can be translated into 'The Veils of Love' and *Islamour* is the hybrid of Islam and Amour. The Arabic title of *Amours voilées*, '*Hijab Al Hob*', translates as 'The Veil of Love' and clearly interrelates the religious garment, *hijab*, with intimate feelings, forging an immediate and controversial link between religious piety and personal relationships while the French title suggests clandestine, furtive love. The opening credits, displaying both titles and a silhouette of a veiled woman with bare shoulders, stress the meaning of the Arabic title and the association between religious and personal matters. The juxtaposition of religion and love (and even sexuality) in the Arabic title bears a more provocative meaning than the French title.

Islamour was the director's first choice of title. Chraïbi stated that he wrote the script in French and subsequently chose a French title. Although there is no obligation for Moroccan films to have an Arabic title, the equivalent title in Arabic is *Islam Ya Salam,* which can be understood and translated in two different ways depending on the pronunciation of the words. 'Ya salam' can be understood as 'amazing', but if the words are delivered ironically, they can be translated as 'Really?!'. The film's ending illustrates that the newly found Islam of the

protagonist contradicts his moral behaviour, meaning the latter interpretation of the Arabic title seems more appropriate. The film's ending also questions the French title: whether the film is about the association of Islam and love or the contradiction between Islam and love. Furthermore, the fact that its primary title was in French and French is given more status in the film marks the importance of French to the director but also that it is becoming an appropriate idiom which can be used in films and at large in Moroccan daily life.[471]

Salmy (born in 1955) moved from theatre to filmmaking in the late 1990s, while Chraïbi (born in 1952) started his filming career in the 1970s. Salmy began his career as a theatre actor and studied with eminent theatre teachers in France.[472] Upon his return to Morocco, Salmy staged some plays and then turned to cinema where he began as an assistant director before directing his own films. Salmy's short features and television films investigate intimate feelings, death, and familial dramas which are linked to social issues such as clandestine immigration. Salmy's theatrical background and his work for television were likely key in shaping the film's televisual aesthetics and mise-en-scène. Chraïbi is an outspoken, political director; he published numerous journal articles, one of which called on King Mohammed VI to improve the state of cinema and funding in Morocco.[473] Chraïbi's work has been celebrated in numerous Moroccan film festivals, and deals with contemporary Moroccan issues, including female and political oppression, torture under former

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[471] Benzakour, 'Langue française et langues locales en terre marocaine: rapports de force et reconstructions identitaires', p.47.
[472] Salmy studied with Andreas Voutsinas (a Greek actor who trained in the 1970s at the Actors Studio and later opened his own school in Paris), Ariane Mnouchkine (French stage director of avant-garde *Théâtre du Soleil*), and Jacques Lecoq (who worked on mimes and the role of the body in theatre as a means of language). Salmy also holds a PhD from Paris III Sorbonne University, which he wrote about Moroccan theatre and its public.
[473] Ameur Cherqui, 'Saâd Chraïbi: cinéma et militantisme', *Albayane*, 26 October 2010 <http://www. maghress.com/fr/albayane/5072> [accessed 23 March 2015].

king Hassan II, and French colonial rule in Morocco.[474]

Both directors, then, are politically and socially engaged; but their treatment of specifically religious matters is where they differ, and this can perhaps be explained by their differing directorial aspirations. Chraïbi's film looks at society's issues through the prism of a protagonist, but against a broader international context. He has explained that his aspiration was to 'illustrate the intolerance and incomprehension that pervades the relationship between the Orient and the West'.[475] Chraïbi's ambitions closely resemble French-Moroccan Nabil Ayouch's in *Whatever Lola Wants* (2008). In Ayouch's view, Hollywood mainly portrays Muslims as terrorists and his film aimed to present an alternative image of Muslims.[476] While Ayouch's film was distributed in France, Chraïbi's film was only viewed in Morocco and Moroccan film festivals, which attenuates the global effect of his declared ambition to reach out to all audiences and introduce a 'dialogue'– unless the 'dialogue' is catalysed within Moroccan society itself; an idea I shall explore later.

The films experienced radically different public receptions. *Amours voilées* ignited heated multi-channel debate – across online blogs, newspapers, television, and radio – particularly focused on one scene in which the unmarried protagonist Batoul kisses her lover Hamza, and then has sexual intercourse, while wearing a veil. However, the high-profile debate seems only to have contributed to the film's commercial success. *Amours voilées* attracted 179,000 viewers in 2009.[477] *Islamour*, in contrast, grossed significantly less than *Amours voilées*, only gathering

[474] Ibid.
[475] Ibid.
[476] Barlet, 'Whatever Lola Wants de Nabil Ayouch', *Africultures*, 12 December 2007 <http://africultures.com/whatever-lola-wants-7180/> [accessed 23 March 2015].
[477] 'Bilan cinématogrpahique de l'année 2016'.

4,050 spectators in 2009 (and fewer than 1,000 in 2010).[478] Despite the difference in commercial success, the films can both be considered 'low budget', or medium budget in Morocco, since they received little funding (200,000 euros each) mainly from the CCM.[479]

Figure 24. *Amours voilées* and *Islamour* posters with French and Arabic titles

Looking at the critical reception of both films, *Amours voilées* received extensive attention from the press and even foreign media, while *Islamour* was not widely discussed. It is however enlightening to compare the films' critical reception by contrasting the attitudes of those who defended or criticized the films. *Islamour* was well received by the Arabic-speaking press and journalists, who praised the film for being a 'well documented feature about the issues the [Moroccan] population faces when they live abroad in Western countries, the struggles they encounter in

[478] The number of viewers in 2008 upon the film's release is not found although the film was released in the main cinemas of Morocco.
'Bilan cinématogrpahique 2009', CCM website <http://www.ccm.ma /inter/phactualite/ bilanfr2009. pdf> [accessed 20 March 2015].
[479] Ibid.

reconnecting with their roots and the alienation they endure while they are abroad'.[480] However, the French-speaking press observed that the film was not as bold as recent Moroccan films, which dealt with taboo subjects such as sexuality, and had little significance when compared with the more recent Moroccan films and the changes Moroccan cinema undergone.[481] Journalist Karim Boukhari likened the film's message to the saying: 'l'enfer est pavé de bonnes intentions'.[482] Boukhari expanded on the failure of the film, criticising the obvious narrative twists and the exaggerated Manichaeism of Abbas, which collectively failed to convey a tolerant or even a coherent message.[483] Journalist Mohammed Bakrim, writing for the Francophone website devoted to Francophone African cinema *Africiné*, considered the film's ending as representative of Abbas's hypocrisy, stating: 'Le film se laisse lire […] comme un constat accablant du comportement d'une certaine élite qui redécouvre les éblouissements de l'appartenance identitaire au prix d'une certaine hypocrisie'.[484] Bakrim's remark is enlightening in the way it links social class to religion. He contradicts the Arabic-speaking press, who praised the film for its depiction of Abbas's religious behaviour, and reconnection with his cultural roots. The Arabic-speaking press did not however discuss the film's ending.

When *Amours voilées* was released, the French-speaking press primarily defended the film, while the Arabic-speaking media criticised the film for its disrespectful and wrongful representation of veiled women. The debate was ignited

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[480] Said Fardi, 'Baada aardh film *Al Islam Ya Salam* fil qaat al wataniya', *Al Fawanis*, 15 November 2008 <http://www.maghress.com/ alfawanis cinema/163> [accessed 20 March 2015].
[481] Boukhari, 'Sorties. America, America', *TelQuel*, 16 May 2008.
[482] Ibid.
[483] Ibid.
[484] Mohammed Bakrim, 'Abbas et la chambre des secrets: *Islam Ya Salam* de Saad Chraïbi (Maroc)', *Africiné*, 12 May 2008 <http://www.africine.org/?menu=art&no=7605> [accessed 20 March 2015].

upon the concurrent release of *Amours voilées* and *Casanegra* in 2009. Both films were criticised by religious clerics, politicians with Islamic affiliation, and parts of both the French- and Arabic-speaking Moroccan press, because they were seen as disrespectful towards religious and social mores. Zemzmi declared that 'cultural freedom of expression has a limit when it comes to distorting the image of pious women'– though he admitted he had not seen the film and justified his decision as a refusal to contribute to its commercial success.[485]

Figure 25. Batoul kissing Hamza while veiled

The vocal opposition of Zemzmi was key, as by 2009 he was a highly publicised person, appearing on television, and writing for online religious websites and Arabic-speaking newspapers (such as *Al Tajdid*, a newspaper close to the PJD). Zemzmi issued numerous *fatwas* in the media on different subjects across culture, sexuality, sports and politics.[486] He won support from Abdellilah Benkirane, the Prime Minister (2011-March 2017) who declared to television channel France 24 that the films (including *Casanegra*) were 'spreading depravity and the zionisation of society, and are part of a larger conspiracy which aims at countering the Islamist

[485] Ibid.
[486] Kawtar Tali, 'Les Fatwas controversées du prédicateur Abdelbari Zemzmi', *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 3 January 2010 < http://www.aujourdhui.ma/une/focus/les-fatwas-controversees-du-predicateur-abdelbari-zemzmi-68114#.VTlCu4cePFI > [accessed 23 March 2015].

wave'– though he also admitted that he had not seen the film.[487] As mentioned in the introduction, when Benkirane became the PJD's leader in 2008, his strategy was not to criticise the regime and the monarchy but to 'champion public morality against his main adversaries in the secularist liberal and leftist currents'.[488] His statement about the film is part of his communication strategy to reaffirm his attachment to Islamic moral values.

For both Benkirane and Zemzmi, however, the burden of morality seems to fall squarely on the veil-wearing women; and it is striking that attacks against the film and its depiction of *hijab* were formulated mainly by men, as women were invisible in these debates. Male behaviour in the films could have been criticized for the men's lack of traditional religious morality. Hamza, for instance, has sexual relations outside marriage with different women; and Anas's gaze is imbued with sexual desire towards women, despite being a strict observer of religion and Islamic precepts. These unbalanced reactions pose the crucial question: why is the 'image' of the veiled woman so important to the preachers?

Women's wearing of the veil in fact bears only a relatively recent significance, dating to the Muslim encounter with colonial powers in the 19th century, when there emerged a new genre of Islamic literature in which the veil became both a marker of Muslim identity and an element of faith – and proof, crucially, of a woman's virtue according to some religious clerics and individuals.[489]

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[487] M'Hamed Hamrouch, 'Le député islamiste Abdelbari Zemzmi appelle à l'interdiction du film *Amours voilées*', *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 9 January 2009 <http://aujourdhui.ma/focus/le-depute-islamiste-abdelbari-zemzmi-appelle-a-linterdiction-du-film-amours-voilees-61202> [accessed 28 March 2015].

[488] Juan A. Macías-Amoretti, 'Seeking an 'Other' Desperately: The Dialectical Opposition of Political Islam in Morocco', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 20.3 (2014), 336-348 (p. 339).

[489] Ziba Mir-Hosseini and Vanja Hamzić, *Control and Sexuality: The Revival of Zina Laws in Muslim Contexts* (London: Women Living Under Muslim Laws, 2010), p. 33.

The *hijab* represents also woman's shelter from the male gaze, thus protecting her, and more importantly her family's honour. As the *hijab* is seen in terms of 'collective identity' rather than 'individual' choices of women, Zemzmi's anger towards the film can be explained as a result of an attack on the collective Islamic identity conceived specifically as a patriarchal system of power.

Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun, who had not seen *Amours voilées*, wrote in its defence: 'L'ère de la censure politique est dépassée et elle ne doit pas être remplacée par une censure religieuse'.[490] Ben Jelloun stressed that 'plus la réalité est transposée dans une fiction, un roman, un film ou une pièce de théâtre, plus ils [les Marocains] sont mal à l'aise'.[491] Ben Jelloun referred to depicting reality and sexuality and the way it influences some of the viewers who reject this 'reality'. The fact that those who debated the film had not watched it is significant – symbolising the fact that the film became only a means by which different ideologies were expressed and fought for, and Ben Jelloun siding for freedom of expression.

Salmy's declared aspiration was to expose the intimate life of a young urban woman and the choices she has to make: either to follow her desires or her religious beliefs. Salmy's aim was to 'expose the problems of society and to create a positive debate' using a more authentic protagonist, as 'the story of a role model would not have been interesting to the public'.[492] The complexity of the character, according to Salmy, lies in Batoul's inability to reconcile 'sa vie sentimentale et sa vie religieuse, entre modernité et conservatisme, entre le divin et le charnel'.[493] Salmy expands on

[490] Tahar Ben Jelloun, 'Débat. Ne nous voilons plus la face', *TelQuel*, 17 April 2009.
[491] Ibid.
[492] Harmach, 'Aziz Salmy: le but de mon film n'est pas de faire la morale', *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 9 January 2009 <http://aujourdhui.ma/focus/aziz-salmy-le-but-de-mon-film-nest-pas-de-faire-la-morale-61220> [accessed 20 April 2015].
[493] Ibid.

the controversial representation of the veil in the film, emphatically and repeatedly answering his critics by stating 'Autant dire que c'est complètement hypocrite de s'offusquer que j'utilise des actrices voilées dans mon film. Ce bout de tissu n'est le symbole de rien. Or l'habit ne fait pas le moine et le foulard ne fait pas la bonne musulmane'.[494]

Batoul's use of *darija*, was also fundamental in the response it provoked. Batoul, is played by French-Algerian actress Belhalloufi (born 1984) a television actress whose most prominent role was in the French television soap *Sous le Soleil*, where she played the French character Rebecca, a young adolescent, for two years (2005-2007).[495] Batoul's accent is not Algerian and she stumbles on some Arabic words and mis-pronounces them. Batoul's accent was widely criticised by the French and Arabic-speaking press, as well as by viewers who commented on the internet who deemed it 'inauthentic' and 'contributes to distort the image of Moroccan women'.[496] The 'foreignness' of Belhalloufi as an actress was hence used by the press and the film's opponents as way to distance her actions from Moroccan women and thus confirm her behaviour was not to be taken as 'real', yet still immoral.

Furthermore, members of the Moroccan Parliament, representing a range of Islamic perspectives, claimed that the French funding *Amours voilées* benefitted from dictated the way the director dealt with religion and represented the *hijab*.[497] In response to such critiques, Salmy stressed publicly that French funding was received

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[494] '*Amours voilées*', Maghreb des films website <http://www.maghrebdesfilms.fr/amours-voilé es.html> [accessed 20 April 2015].
[495] *Sous le Soleil* was produced by French television channel TF1 and had relative success, lasting for twelve years and being broadcast in over eighty countries.
[496] 'Hijab Al Hob youthirou azma fil Maghrib', *Hesspress,* 28 January 2009 <https://www.hespress.com/videos/10744.html> [accessed 10 May 1017].
[497] Harmach, 'Aziz Salmy: le but de mon film n'est pas de faire la morale'.

only during the post-production phase, and had no bearing on the film's subject or way of dealing with the *hijab*.[498] CCM's director Noureddine Sail openly supported *Amours voilées* after its release and the CCM delivered the distribution visa without censoring or cutting the film (which included scenes of nudity).[499]

However, Batoul's use of French was not criticised by the press or the public which exposes the links between authenticity and the use of Moroccan *darija*. Salmy also mentioned that although the script was written in Arabic, some actors and actresses chose to deliver certain lines in French; he insisted that he was not concerned with the language so much as with the fluidity of the discussion. [500] This declaration is key to analysing the film, since Salmy was not tied to making a political point through the language used in itself; however, Salmy used dialogues, either in French or *darija* to convey his authorial view.

By contrast, Abbas's sister Ouafae, played by French-Moroccan actress Souad Amidou, lives in France comes back with her French boyfriend, and speaks little *darija*. Amidou admitted that her lack of proficiency in *darija* did not allow her to perform in Moroccan films until recently, when she overcame her 'handicap'; as her lack of proficiency in *darija* ceased to matter to audiences.[501] Moral authority is, therefore, tightly linked to language: Belhalloufi was criticised for her lack of mastery of *darija* because her character wears a veil while the press did not mention the fact that Amidou suffered from the same problem.

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[498] Ibid.
[499] Sanaa Eddaïf, 'Centre cinématographique marocain: l'après-Saïl, les réactions des professionnels', *L'Économiste*, 14 April 2014 <https://www.leconomiste.com/article/934901-centre-cinematographique-marocain-l-apres-sail-les-reactions-des-professionnels> [accessed 10 May 2017].
[500] Harmach, 'Aziz Salmy: le but de mon film n'est pas de faire la morale'.
[501] 'Souad Amidou: je rêve d'interpréter le rôle d'une marocaine à part entière', *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 2 December 2007 <http://aujourdhui.ma/culture/souad-hamidou-je-reve-dinterpreter-le-role-dune-marocaine-a-part-entiere-88374> [accessed 10 February 2015].

The linguistic, moral debate almost entirely outweighed the artistic criticism of *Amours voilées*, with journalists and film critics barely discussing the film from a technical, aesthetic or performative perspective. The few newspapers that did, compared *Amours voilées* to a 'television documentary with weak dialogues' and argued that the director consciously aimed to create controversy to mask the film's technical and aesthetics deficiencies.[502] Middle Eastern newspaper *Al Sahrq Al Awsat* summed up the debate by stating: 'if it were not for the scarf, the film could be mistaken for a Mexican television series [a telenova]'.[503] By its unrealistic settings, and an over-use of sentimental music, the film seems largely inspired by television soaps. *Amours voilées* is for example unrealistic in depicting women's lives: they jog by the cornice, dressed in pink sportswear; they only meet one man (while the cornice by the seaside is a busy area and the chances of meeting women jogging are even smaller), but I see it as an attempt to deliberately engage in a non-realist aesthetic in order to make more controversial statements.

In the same manner as the American series *Sex and the City*, women in *Amours voilées* are independent and provide for themselves. They gather in restaurants, the beauty salon, the *hammam*, or Batoul's house to freely discuss personal matters: love, marriage, sexuality, the veil, and religion (in relation to marriage as well). Despite this limited setting, Salmy liberates women in other ways and gives them a space to establish their identity as independent beings. Hardly any shots of 'daily life' are available, apart from Anas's shop or a shot of a children playing in a school's backyard. By having few locations and a disconnection from social realities, the film succeeds in illustrating how the middle- and upper-class

[502] Al Talidi, 'Ulamaa yantakidoun film Hijab Al Hob'.
[503] Latifa Al Arousni, '*Hijab Al Hob*…film maghribi yatrahou 'alhijab' kamafhum lil iltizam el dini', *Al sharq Al Awsat*, 26 December 2008 <https://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=25&article=500421&issueno=10986> [accessed 20 March 2015].

characters live in a world that is cut off from social realities. Similarly, *Islamour* has few locations, and has been impacted by the limited budget. Shot in four weeks on location, in the mountainous region of Azrou, the film suffers from a lack of clear lighting as well as sound editing, which obscures dialogue in some scenes, and abruptly ends others. *Islamour* makes an exaggerated use of non-diegetic music in order to build up the drama and suspense, and it renders dialogues less audible and the film's overall intention less explicit.

Religious practice is central to the framing and editing of both films. Batoul is filmed praying, re-arranging her *hijab*, and reading the Quran. Abbas is often seen accomplishing religious rituals; praying on the tomb of his father, attending religious meetings, and buying religious books. Abbas's reconnection with religious practice is displayed through his choice of both dress and language. Abbas dresses in the same manner as Anas (in a white robe) and ostentatiously holds the *misbah*. The scene where Abbas is given the *misbah* is symbolic of Abbas's desire to reconnect with what he believes is his 'true' identity. The scene is shot in a coffee terrace where Abbas sits between a French-speaking man dressed in a suit reading a French newspaper, and an old man dressed in traditional clothes who speaks in *darija*. The shot then cuts to remove the French-speaker, leaving Abbas in discussion with the old man and then Abbas receiving the *misbah*. The removal of the French-speaking man from the frame speaks to Abbas's efforts to reclaim his Muslim identity (what he feels is his *true* identity) by sacrificing that which links him to France. Abbas speaks *darija* and holds the *misbah* as proof of his renewed *authentic* self.

The contrast between Abbas's and Anas's religious behaviour illustrates how their different social positions within the family and broader Moroccan society rest on the power of their religious discourse. Anas and Abbas make use of religious

discourse in different manners. Both use Quranic verses or injunctions linked to religion in their private and public lives. Religion is part of Anas's daily life; his fervour is demonstrated in the film by his invocation of Quranic verses and his strict observance of religious practices. Abbas, on the other hand, is a 'beginner' and acknowledges it by asking the bookseller, while he buys religious books, to go easy on him. The film insists on the external aspects of Abbas's religious behaviour and illustrates how Abbas reconnects with his identity by attending male-only religious gatherings as if that alone was proof of his piety.

Abbas's knowledge of religious verse is limited; this is demonstrated in the shot where he is limited to reciting only *Al Fatiha* when he visits his father's tomb, whilst the *fqih* (religious person) recites longer verses. *Al Fatiha* is the first chapter of the Quran that every Muslim learns, as it opens the prayer. The sociolinguist Niloofar Haeri observes that in Egypt *Al Fatiha* is what illiterate mothers know; Abbas, like an illiterate – although many Muslims do not speak or master Arabic – is also seen mumbling in the religious gathering as if he does not understand the words but wants to prove his faith.[504] However, in the presence of other religious people, Abbas's behaviour differs from his behaviour with the rest of his family. He is authoritative and dominant with his wife and daughter (asking them to dress properly, fighting with his wife over religious matters and accusing her and the West of misunderstanding Islam) and tries to direct his sister's love life (asking if she intends to marry her French boyfriend who is a 'heretic'). Yet when dealing with religious characters, Abbas is respectful and subordinate; he does not consider social class.

[504] Nilooofar Haeri, *Sacred Language, Ordinary People: Dilemmas of Culture and Politics in Egypt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 37.

Comparing Anas's lack of authority and Abbas's position in his family demonstrates that religious authority is not derived from linguistic abilities but from the social position of the protagonist. Anas, unlike Abbas, has significant knowledge of the Quran, and for different social situations can recite an appropriate passage. Religion dictates his social interactions. He tells his friend that he cannot stay alone in Batoul's car, confirming the religious rule that unmarried men and women cannot be together in a closed space (otherwise evil will be present) although he lives under the same roof as her. Anas is torn between his religious commitment and his desire for Batoul.

Despite the centrality of religion and the authority he feels it grants him, Anas's religious discourse is dismissed throughout the film. One particular scene illustrates this through actions, music and gestures, rather than speech. When Anas and Batoul are in the car, Anas's religious authority is diminished through an ordinary incident. Anas remarks that listening to the Quran would be better than listening to the radio and recites a Quranic verse ألا بالله تطمئن القلوب ('Isn't it with words of God that hearts are at peace?'). Batoul dismisses his words by putting on Egyptian music, thus diminishing the impact of his words, and even mocking him with her brother and sisters who are framed in the back giggling. Anas's position is clearly powerless; he cannot drive, he cannot impose his choices, and the Quranic passages he uses have no effect on Batoul's behaviour. Furthermore, Anas is consistently isolated; he is filmed, from a crane shot, reading the Quran and listening to religious cassettes in his spare time. This shot underscores his pious behaviour whilst also revealing his social isolation and loneliness in the house – which ultimately compounds his lack of authority.

In the subsequent scene, Anas fantasises about his marriage to Batoul. He reverses the situation experienced in the car; achieving a sense of power in the realm of the imagination. Egyptian music is replaced by religious verses and Batoul – now fully veiled and clothed in white – has become religiously observant. Since Anas cannot impose his opinion or declare his love, fantasy remains the only way he can marry Batoul and impose respectfulness upon her. In his fantasy, he is the only one looking at Batoul, while she is framed looking at the ground in a pious and submissive way. Religious discourse is also used by Anas to attempt to obscure the well-established authority of class and education. Religious language is used to justify Anas's right to marry Batoul, despite the socio-economic realities that set them apart. He is conscious that he works in her father's boutique as a salesman whilst she is a doctor. His friend however emphasises that marriage should overcome class difference and he should accomplish the 'halal' (what God allows), emphasising that 'in halal there is no shame'.

The complex interaction between religious authority and social position is best illustrated by comparing Batoul's mother with Abbas's wife. Batoul's mother, dressed in a long Moroccan traditional dress *manousriya* with her head covered, is different from Betty who is connected to the internet and speaks French and English (but no *darija*). Batoul's mother tolerates her daughter's nights out and even defends her when her brother starts questioning his sister's behaviour, forcing him to admit he has not worked as hard as Batoul. Anas consults Batoul's mother when he asks for permission to marry Batoul. Betty on the other hand cannot even handle the plumber, due to both her linguistic inability and her lack of authority. Batoul's mother is pious and pushes for her daughter to get married while Betty cannot answer back to Abbas when he tries to control their domestic life. Betty's inability to

speak openly with Abbas, although they speak French and English, is more tied to the way Abbas sees his wife. Abbas thinks his wife has sided with the 'West'. Any political discussion between Abbas and his wife becomes a political tribune for Abbas, where he takes over and imposes his authority and ideology. French or English language are of lesser value to Betty, not equating to higher authority; she is undermined by Abbas's authority.

Batoul, on the other hand, chooses to impose her religious choices upon Hamza and confronts him; and the following scene explores the dynamic of linguistic-religious authority between Batoul and Hamza. A two-shot scene where Batoul drives, dressed in the *hijab*, shows Hamza gazing at her in disbelief that she is veiled, surprised that she would go along with such costume and behaviour. A bilingual dialogue about the *hijab* ensues that mixes French and *darija*. Hamza disrespectfully qualifies the scarf in *darija* as *charouita*, which means rag. When Batoul pulls over, she succumbs and kisses Hamza, and they are framed in a close-up enhancing the intimacy of the scene, but a guard spots them and intrudes, reminding them it is Ramadhan and such behaviour is unacceptable, which leads them to flee. The guard represents the 'collective eye' or 'moral sense' which reminds Batoul of her religious duties; she insists they should respect the 'halal'. Batoul even states: 'Nous ne sommes pas en France'. This sentence is significant in the way it distances Batoul from any Western behaviour, implying Hamza's behaviour is not acceptable in Morocco, and that she is the one who is behaving 'correctly', even if she says so in French. Hence, even if she speaks French, Batoul does not embrace what she perceives as French morals.

Batoul's use of *darija* and French vary according to the impact she aims to have upon Hamza. When discussing religion and marriage Batoul speaks in *darija*.

Batoul transitions into *darija* to confirm her attachment to moral values and associates it with religion and marriage. Yet, Batoul's flawed accent when she speaks *darija* accentuates her contradictory and divisive feelings between her religious duties and her sexual desire, like two separate identities. Hamza is unimpressed by Batoul's religious discourse and insists on remaining unmarried. Hamza, unlike Abbas, does not consider his life in Morocco different from the life he could have lived while abroad. Hamza's use of French is hence associated with secular ideas and his dismissal of Batoul's veil.

Hamza's attitude could be paralleled with Marc's point of view on religion. Abbas drives Marc back after they attend a religious gathering. Abbas asks Marc if he will convert to Islam if he marries his sister (while, as his sister rightly observed, Abbas's wife has not converted to Islam). Abbas's religious authority is brushed off by Marc's use of French and his feeling of detachment from the situation. Marc is only an observer and maintains distance by not getting involved in family affairs or religious discussions. Marc's position parallels Hamza's behaviour; both feel at ease with their chosen path in life, neither wanting to be disturbed. The French language – combined with the social status of the protagonists, and their gender – is, in both films, the language that authoritatively opposes religious discourse.

The *hijab* in *Amours voilées* has also social implications for women and not through its inherent religious meaning. When the five female friends gather in Batoul's room, Nadjwa, a doctor who works with Batoul, informs them that she will keep the *hijab* even after Ramadhan to find a husband. Houyam mocks Nadjwa's decision and denounces the hypocrisy of the habit of veiling during Ramadhan and observing moral practices such as listening to Amr Khalid – ranked by the *New York Times* in 2006 as the 'world's most famous and influential Muslim television

figure'.[505] Khalid had commercial success on satellite television; he was popular amongst urban educated classes. His shows were about strengthening the faith of Muslims, educating them about the Prophet's life, and discussing practical issues. He was not seen as extreme in relation to his religious opinions, but his shows stopped in 2008 as the Egyptian authorities, fearing his growing political influence, particularly amongst the wealthy and educated. Khalid then moved to the United Kingdom, and only resumed his preaching activities after the 'Arab Spring' in 2011. By evoking Khalid, the film anchors itself within Moroccan society whilst at the same time demonstrating how religious practices have changed in a globalised era through satellite television and the influence of non-Moroccan preachers.

During the discussion Nadjwa uses French to emphasise her determination in keeping the *hijab*. Linguistic turns in French are used to stress her point. She says 'Détrompe-toi ma chérie' and 'la preuve'. Houyam however is more radical in her opinion about the *hijab*. She states she would rather shave her head than wear the *hijab*. *Darija* is used as well by Houyam to affirm her opposition to the *hijab.* Houyam introduces herself as a *neguafa* – a *darija* word that designates women who dress and look after the bride during traditional Moroccan weddings. The word reveals the demarcation of Houyam as an outsider in terms of education and social position compared to her female friends. Hence, the French language is not the only language to counter religious discourse.

In this scene French is only used to confirm opinions while *darija* is the main medium of asserting one's opinion – as is the case for Houyam and Nadjwa. Houyam's opposition to the *hijab* is not linked to her linguistic mastery of French

[505] Samantha M. Shapiro, 'Ministering to the Upwardly Mobile Muslim', *The New York Times*, 30 April 2006.

(like Hamza and Marc) but is more linked to her social status as the owner of her beauty salon. Her priorities are economic rather than spiritual; to feed her children and not to get involved in religious matters. Religion is of little importance to Houyam and seems important to Nadjwa primarily to obtain marriage.

Nadjwa's situation contrasts as well with Kalthoum, Abbas's illegitimate daughter. Urban and educated, Nadjwa aims only at getting married, while Kalthoum is from a rural area and aims to reach higher education and to escape her social situation. Abbas's daughter, Itto, questions Kalthoum's education and its ties with Islamic education, repeating an overheard discourse (in Moroccan media), in French, that Moroccan national education is impregnated with Islamic education.[506] However, Kalthoum contradicts this claim, and the film further suggests that social mobility is possible in Morocco. This is evidenced by Kalthoum, from a rural village, attending university, and Kalthoum's linguistic abilities illustrate that higher education is concurrent with a mastery of the French language.

Amours voilées and *Islamour* reveal the tensions within Moroccan society around the role that religion plays in shaping people's behaviour, whether they act in complicity or rebellion. Socio-economic status also significantly affects the authority of the speaker's discourse. *Amours voilées* and *Islamour* illustrate that religious discourse can only be influential if the person who delivers it has both power and status, conveyed by the family or by society. In other words, a mastery of Standard Arabic is not proof of religiosity or religious authority within these films.

[506] Mohammed El Ayadi, 'Entre islam et islamisme. La religion dans l'école publique marocaine', *Revue internationale d'éducation de Sèvres*, 36 (2004), 111-122 <https://journals.openedition.org/ ries/1507> [accessed 20 Novemeber 2015].

Conclusion

In the introduction to this chapter, I grouped the films thematically and historically according to the role that language played in each. Although each film has a unique combination of languages, they raise similar questions concerning the debates about language and its relation to politics, religion and class in Algeria and Morocco. Standard Arabic was not widely used in films and was subtly mocked in *Roma ouella n'touma*, associated with mundane, everyday Islamism. Unlike the protagonists of *Les Chevaux de Dieu*, the protagonists of *Roma ouella n'touma* remain suspicious of and distanced from Islamic ideology. In *Les Chevaux de Dieu*, Standard Arabic is the language of the Islamic community and is positively connoted as it allows young people to develop new understandings of self, albeit via religious indoctrination. The exclusion of Standard Arabic in *Rachida* and *Barakat!* is an ideological gesture: these films distance themselves from the official language, and from the official narrative of the Black Decade.

The French language, on the other hand, is present in films across gender and social classes. French is presented positively in *Rachida* and *Amours voilées* yet it is associated with higher education. *Amours voilées* has shown also that when it comes to religion, French-speaking characters are not polarised: those who refuse the *hijab* are not necessarily French-speakers. In *Barakat!*, French is, somewhat paradoxically, the language of the *mujahida* figure, presented as a strong, determined, and independent woman, but also the language of terrorists or *mafieux* (as in *Morituri*) blurring the ideology underpinning French language during the Black Decade.

Darija, is presented in the films as the de facto an Algerian or Moroccan national language. In *Rachida*, *darija* lends a sense of 'authenticity' to the characters and empowers Rachida. *Darija* allows her to articulate her identity, her ideology,

and her Algerianness. *Darija* allows Rachida to weave her own narrative into the grand fabric of the nation. In *Morituri*, meanwhile, *darija* is the language of both the terrorists and the police – that is, the language of violence and justice, among other things. Like *Casanegra*, *Roma ouella n'touma* asserts the 'Algerianness' (or Morocanness) of *darija*, a language capable of conveying political and intellectual ideas and offering to young people a means of subversion and contestation. Finally, the combination of French and *darija* becomes a language in itself in *Barakat!*, one that is capable of encompassing antagonistic ideologies as well as asserting women's power.

Chapter Four: Powerless Women, Powerful Men? Exploring Language, Gender, Power and Sexuality

This chapter focuses on the relationship between language, power, gender, and sexuality in a selection of four Moroccan and four Algerian films selected across a period from 2004 to 2015. The Moroccan films are *Much Loved* (Dir. Nabil Ayouch, 2015), *Les Jardins de Samira* (2007, Dir. Latif Lahlou), *Agadir Bombay* (Dir. Myriam Bakir, 2011) and *Sur la planche* (Dir. Leila Kilani, 2011). The Algerian films are Moknèche's Algerian trilogy – *Le Harem de Madame Osmane* (2000), *Viva Laldjérie* (2004), and *Délice Paloma* (2007) – as well as Allouache's *Les Terrasses* (2013).

I have assembled the films by country of origin to discuss them through their comparable cultural and social grounds. Particularly important will be how these films construct their characters' gender identity and empower the protagonists in relation to language. French, *darija* and to a lesser extent Standard Arabic are all used in these films. The first section will discuss the four Moroccan films. I will examine whether these films disavow preconceived ideas of women as submissive and men as dominant and fearless and I will examine whether, and to what extent, language emerges plausibly as a valuable tool to resist patriarchal dominance. Similarly, questions of gender, sexuality and social ambition will be analysed in the four Algerian films. I will begin with Moknèche's filmic trilogy constructed around women and using French as the main idiom, I will then explore Allouache's film that takes in Algiers after the so called 'Arab Spring' and illustrates the ambitions and disillusions of men and women. First, however, I will provide an overview of some

of the most relevant concepts in the field of language, gender, and power as these concepts are at the core of my textual analysis of these films.

Gender, Language, and Power: A Theoretical Overview

This section is a succinct review of sociolinguistic research in relation to language, gender, and power. The aim is to highlight the different trends that have emerged over time as research has been influenced by feminist criticism, gender theory, and cultural studies. Robin Lakoff's 1973 seminal article 'Language and Woman's Place' marks the debut of sociolinguistic and anthropological research in language, gender, and power.[507] The American sociolinguist analysed 'woman's language' in the context of Western industrialised societies, and argued that in mixed-sex conversations women use, amongst other linguistic forms, hedges, interrogative intonation, and suggestions rather than direct command, which leads them to be taken less seriously than men (a causality that was questioned by other socio linguists as I will discuss in this section).[508] Lakoff noted that women used fewer swear words than men, were more polite, and had 'hypercorrect' grammar.[509]

Lakoff further argued that women were silenced by being prohibited from using the same words as men use, and for her 'woman's language' is founded on the 'attitude that women are marginal to the serious concerns of life, which are pre-empted by men'.[510] Lakoff concluded that women found themselves in a contradictory position: if they speak the way they are expected, that is as 'ladies', they are not taken seriously and are powerless, and if they speak more resolutely,

[507] Robin Lakoff, 'Language and Woman's Place', *Language in Society*, 2.1 (1973), 45-79.
[508] Ibid., p.47.
[509] Ibid. pp. 47-48.
[510] Ibid., p. 46.

that is like men, they are ridiculed and 'subjected to criticism as unfeminine'.[511] Therefore, for Lakoff, women were assigned an inferior place in society, and 'woman's language' was to be associated with powerlessness, while conversely men's dominance was preserved through their linguistic behaviour.[512]

Linguists termed Lakoff's approach to sex differences the 'dominance' approach, which is concerned with an imbalance of power between the sexes. Those who use 'woman's language' will be perceived as weak, unassertive, and lacking in authority. Lakoff's view that women's language is deficient when compared to men's or reflects men's dominance was criticised by other sociolinguists. First, her work was considered to rely heavily on personal observation and to be lacking in empirical research. Indeed, Lakoff derived her conclusions from her own speech and from observing only white, relatively privileged, suburban American women.[513]

Following Lakoff's article, sociolinguists expanded on her findings and came up with another approach to distinguish between how women and men speak. Sociolinguist Deborah Tannen introduced a non-hierarchical concept of 'difference' to distinguish men and women's speech.[514] Tannen suggested that due to their social upbringing, women and men learn different behaviours and ways of speaking; and language translates into social roles and how men and women socialise.[515] For Tannen, the language used by women is primarily 'rapport-talk', which means it establishes connections and promotes sameness amongst women.[516] Men, on the other hand, use language described as 'report-talk' as a way of preserving

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[511] Ibid., p. 48.
[512] Ibid.
[513] Ibid., p. 46.
[514] Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: William Morrow, 1990), p. 74.
[515] Ibid., pp. 74-77.
[516] Ibid., p. 77.

independence while exhibiting knowledge and skill.[517] Therefore, the difference between men and women's speech was that women collaborate while men seek to acquire and maintain social status and hierarchical order status through language.

While Tannen's and Lakoff's approaches differ – Tannen studied peer groups (at school and sports teams) and Lakoff was concerned with family talk – they nonetheless share the idea that women's language is distinct. Anthropologist and sociolinguist Susan Gal criticised Lakoff's and Tannen's approaches and the equation of 'woman's language' with 'woman'. Gal argued that it is the speaker's words that create a speaker's identity and power: 'the categories of women's speech, men's speech, or powerful speech are not just indexically derived from the identities of speakers. Indeed, sometimes a speaker's utterances create identity'.[518] Gal surveyed the way English middle-class women speak and observed that these women 'use more prestigious English than middle-class men'.[519]

For Gal, gender differences in language often transcend social class, implying that women use more prestigious language to gain power over men. Gal also argued that gender is 'negotiated' rather than fixed, and that language and changing linguistic practices mediate it. Gal also defined power as 'symbolic domination' and a 'product of culture' that is perpetuated by schools, in the media, and by state representatives.[520] For Gal, women's language can be seen as 'strategic responses, often of resistance, to dominant hegemonic cultural forms' and that when women use 'male' forms this can indicate 'nonconformity'.[521] To resist dominant cultural orders, therefore, other forms of language are used such as 'slang, minority

[517] Ibid.
[518] Gal, 'Language, Gender and Power: An Anthropological Review', p.171.
[519] Ibid.
[520] Ibid., p. 175.
[521] Ibid., p. 179.

language, local vernaculars, [and] women's interactional styles' even if these forms are widely denigrated and stigmatised.[522] Gal's findings demonstrate how the definition of power has shifted over the last two decades under the influence of feminism and critical theories, from the concept of institutionalised domination – exercised by the few who possess it over the majority that is dominated – to a changing practice varying over time.

Deborah Cameron, a pioneer in research on gender and language, also took issue with the generic term 'woman' used in 'woman's language'; Cameron argued that 'women' do not form a homogenous group, as they differ in terms of age, class, and ethnicity.[523] Moreover, the way women speak should not be restricted to subordination as per Lakoff's view, but instead – or as well – should be considered as a means of resisting power or a tool for women to cope with their condition.[524] Similarly, sociolinguist Jennifer Coates argued that there is no binary opposition between masculine and feminine speech as gender and language change and develop according to social interaction and daily practice.[525]

Cameron also redefined power by drawing on Michel Foucault's theory as 'understanding it [power] as a multiple relation […] recognising the links between power and resistance'.[526] For Cameron, power is a strategy, an action, and an ever-shifting process of establishing and enacting role relations rather than a static state held by one agent over another. For Cameron, language is also important in negotiating power, even for the marginalised and disempowered. Furthermore,

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[522] Ibid., p. 175.
[523] Deborah Cameron, 'Gender, Language, and Discourse: A Review Essay', *Signs*, 23.4 (1998), 945-973 (p. 947).
[524] Ibid, pp. 947-950.
[525] Jennifer Coates, *Women, Men and Language*: *A Sociolinguistic Account of Sex Differences in Language* (London: Longman, 1986), p. 204.
[526] Cameron, *Researching Language: Issues of Power and Method* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 20.

Cameron argued that women's powerlessness in the 1980s resulted from the absence of women's voices in the public domain as they were denied access to speech styles that would allow them to enter the public domain, such as politics and media.[527]

For Cameron, women self-censored themselves or were prevented from speaking either by social taboos and restrictions or by the more 'genteel tyrannies of custom and practice'.[528] Silence, Cameron observed, stemmed from self-censorship for fear of ridicule, attack, or indifference.[529] Cameron also noted that there are persisting normative expectations about how men and women should talk, and strong persistence of women's language stereotypes, reinforcing and maintaining gender distinctions and hierarchies. Cameron argued that women have been instructed to speak properly, as they were instructed to dress properly, and this is what she termed 'verbal hygiene'.[530] Verbal hygiene imposes language norms upon women. Moreover, Cameron pointed out that the ideology that denigrated women was maintained by both men and women.[531]

While Cameron, Gal and Lakoff focused on constraints on speech, by the 1970s, the French philosopher Hélène Cixous, the psychonalayst Luce Irigaray, and the philosopher Julia Kristeva called for 'writing the female body' in an '*écriture feminine*'. [532] Cixous argued that the written language articulates a male ideology and was used to 'encode and maintain the dominant patriarchal order' and called for *écriture feminine* in her 1975 essay *Le Rire de la méduse* as a political gesture that

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[527] Cameron, *Feminism and Linguistic Theory* (London: Macmillan 1985), p. 67.
[528] Cameron, 'Introduction: Why is Language a Feminist Issue?', in *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*, ed. by Deborah Cameron, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 1-21 (pp. 3-4).
[529] Ibid.
[530] Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 20.
[531] Ibid.
[532] Fiona Tolan, 'Feminisms', in *The Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide* ed. by Patricia Waugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 320-339 (p. 333).

would disrupt the 'order and law of patriarchal language'.[533] Cixous argued that women should write (about) their bodies and sexuality as it empowers them to overthrow masculine ideologies and to create a new female discourse: 'il faut que la femme s'écrive […] En s'écrivant, la femme fera retour à ce corps qu'on lui a confisqué, dont on a fait l'inquiétant étranger dans la place […] À censurer le corps, on censure du même coup le souffle, la parole. Écris toi : il faut que ton corps se fasse entendre'.[534] For Cixous, *écriture feminine* was a unique way of writing about intimacy, making 'the unconscious heard', even if the writing turns out to be 'eccentric , incomprehensible, and inconsistent, and if such writing is difficult to read […] it is because the feminine voice has been suppressed for so long'. [535] Irigaray, critical of Freud's theory defining women as imperfect castrated men, argued that women's problematic relationship to masculine language was rooted in female sexuality as women's sexual pleasure, and *jouissance*, cannot be expressed by the dominant male language.[536] Kristeva, relying on psychoanalysis and semiotics, argued that female language was suppressed and male language became the 'norm'.[537]

Even if some of this research avoided the simplification that depicted women and men as two natural split categories with distinct speaking styles, one recurring problem was that the research tended to perpetuate a popular conflation of gender with fixed categories of 'men' and 'women'. By the 1990s, however, due to the gender theory developed by Judith Butler, sociolinguists went further in questioning

[533] Hélène Cixous, 'Le Rire de la méduse', *Revue de l'Arc*, 61 (1975), 39-54.
[534] Ibid. pp. 39-43.
[535] Tolan, 'Feminisms', p. 336.
[536] Ann Rosalind Jones, 'Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of "L'Écriture Feminine"', *Feminist Studies*, 7.2 (1981), 247-263 (p. 250).
[537] Tolan, 'Feminisms', p. 335.

the assumption of homogenous groups of 'men' and 'women' and the association of dominant power structures with masculinity. Butler advanced that 'gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a "natural" kind of being'.[538] Butler rejected any account that treats sex as the foundation of gender; and linguistic research has taken Butler's concepts of performativity and performance as useful concepts to investigate the relationship between language and gender.

Gender, therefore, is not fixed and attained once and for all but is an ongoing performance produced by repeated actions. For Cameron, 'each individual subject must constantly negotiate the norms, behaviours, and discourses that define masculinity and femininity for a community at a particular time in history'.[539] Following Butler's views on gender, sociolinguists attended to the diversity of femininities and masculinities and moved away from the equation of male with power and female with powerlessness. Instead, research focused on the ways in which gender could be performed using language or linguistic variations (pronunciation of certain vowels or choice of words).[540] Cameron rightly pointed out that sexual identities as well as gender identities are locally and culturally variable and they do influence one another.[541] Hence, for Cameron, to study language and power is also to pay attention to what shapes gender stereotypes, such as the power of mass media that attributes 'appropriate' gender roles through language.[542]

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[538] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 32.
[539] Cameron, 'Gender, Language, and Discourse: A Review Essay', p. 947.
[540] Cameron, 'Language, Gender, and Sexuality: Current Issues and New Directions', *Applied Linguistics*, 26.4 (2005), 482–502 (p. 491).
[541] Ibid., p. 494.
[542] Ibid.

One of the other issues of research in gender and language is that the main scholarship on language and gender concentrates on English-speaking environments, mainly monolingual and white. In 1992, Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet urged researchers to rethink the way 'men' and 'women' were constructed as homogenous groups and to abandon biases of ethnocentricity, to take into account class, race, ethnicity, and age, and to reach out to research in other countries across other languages.[543] In the 1990s, more and more studies were done on 'minorities' living in the US, for instance the use of Hispanic languages in America, and African-American vernacular English. This led researchers to move away from a narrow focus on a straight, white, middle-class version of femininity and masculinity as well as a standardised English language.

However, there is still limited study of Algeria and Morocco's use of language and gender, with the notable exception of the works of anthropologist and sociolinguist Fatima Sadiqi who has analysed mixed-sex conversations. The focus of sociolinguistics in Algeria and Morocco during the past decades has been the political role played by languages in relation to national identity (particularly Berber and *darija*), and the politics of Arabisation, but gender studies of language and its relation to power in the Maghreb have still to be further explored. In *Women, Language and Gender*, Sadiqi draws on English scholarship in sociolinguistics and questions how it can be applied to Morocco, where tenacious old political and cultural traditions as well as visible patriarchal dominance are still cultivated.[544] Sadiqi argued that Morocco's Islamic tradition, diverse languages, and monarchical regime determine the gaps between women and men's language. Sadiqi rightly

[543] Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet, 'Think Practically and Look Locally: Language and Gender as Community-Based Practice', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 21 (1992), 461-490.
[544] Fatima Sadiqi, *Women, Gender, and Language in Morocco* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 7.

observes that language, gender, and power cannot be isolated from 'class, economics and bigotry'.[545]

Sadiqi's book also highlights the difference between urban and rural environments and the private and public spaces that influence how women and men speak.[546] The languages attributed to women are hence the languages of the private sphere, which are also mainly rural *darija* and Berber. Women became the preservers of oral culture as they use *darija* and Berber in the household and find themselves in the paradoxical situation of the conservative speakers who maintain tradition and 'non-conservative' speakers since they do not use Standard Arabic as often as men in the public arena.[547] Sadiqi examines how men use Standard Arabic in the public space, media, politics, and religion to gain power and authority, and how when women use Standard Arabic they penetrate a masculine space. Women's use of Standard Arabic removes them from the public 'lower position' and destabilises the hierarchy.[548] Therefore, men do not encourage women to use Standard Arabic in public discourse as it is part of masculine identity and power. French, on the other hand, is also perceived by Sadiqi as a prestigious language that, like Standard Arabic, is associated with power, urbanity, and the public domain.[549] Men, however, are more favourable towards women who use French as it symbolises prestige while it does not threaten their position and dominance in society. French is also only mastered by highly educated women in urban areas.

For Sadiqi, women traditionally exert less influence in the public sphere. However, the penetration of women into public space through work and urbanisation

[545] Ibid., p. 277.
[546] Ibid., p. 74.
[547] Ibid., p. 38.
[548] Ibid., p. 280.
[549] Ibid., p. 40.

has contributed to linguistic changes. Women emerge as active agents of change in civil society and the public sphere as they contribute to linguistic versatility and actively participate in the social changes that are taking place. Women use languages to access the public sphere and even feminise it, which is evidenced in the print media, television, and films. In return, the media has transformed the way women see themselves and how they are spoken of and allowed women to express themselves.[550]

While women are more visible on the public scene, Sadiqi notes too that they cannot use the same language as men and there is an ongoing hostility towards women using taboo words.[551] For Sadiqi, taboo words prevent women from fully accessing the public domain and exclude them by prohibiting them from pronouncing these words that are made 'invisible' to women.[552] Furthermore, either publicly or privately, women's speech needs to be controlled by men and even by other women, as in the example of the mother-in-law in the household who controls the bride.[553]

Sadiqi's work as well as previous research reveals the degree to which power is contested or asserted through changing linguistic practices. Language becomes a site for the analysis of power as 'finding the attempts at resistance will tell us where and how [power] is exerted'.[554] In analysing the corpus of films in this chapter, I will investigate how the use of slang, taboo, and transgressive language challenges societal norms in terms of gender, and whether it gives rise to anxiety amongst the public. My aim is also to determine whether one language is more empowering than

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[550] Ibid.
[551] Cameron, 'Language, Gender, and Sexuality: Current Issues and New Directions', p. 482.
[552] Sadiqi, p. 79.
[553] Ibid.
[554] Ibid., p. 176.

another in the context of multilingual films. I will also challenge Sadiqi's claim that it is only French and Standard Arabic that empower women and men, while she argues that the same cannot be said of *darija*.

Morocco On the Edge

Much Loved; 'I am a *kahba* [prostitute], and this is how I speak'

It is noticeable that over the last decade, Moroccan films such as *Marock* and *Amours voilées* were deemed controversial for their representations of social mores pertaining to women's sexuality and religion. Yet none of these films reached the level of debate and controversy that Nabil Ayouch's *Much Loved* did in 2015. *Much Loved* is set in Marrakech and focuses on four female prostitutes who drink alcohol, speak raunchy *darija* and service wealthy Saudi clients. Moroccan journalists and politicians reacted with defensiveness and discomfort towards the film's display of female prostitution, nudity and crude language.

While discussing *Much Loved* I aim at disentangling the themes that were deemed controversial in it and focus on the most thought-provoking and controversial one: the use of vulgar language by women. Indeed, I argue that crude language was a major trigger in the controversy because the film's female protagonists appropriate obscene language, often associated with male speech. By contrast, when the male characters in *Casanegra* (discussed in Chapter three) used street slang and crude language, none of the critics deemed the language inappropriate. Instead, the language was praised for its realism since it allowed the young men to contest their harsh living conditions. To further comprehend how *Much Loved's* language appears to have challenged patriarchal values and

masculinity, I will contrast it with *Les Jardins de Samira, Agadir Bombay* and *Sur la planche.*

Much Loved is Ayouch's sixth feature film, with which he aimed for a 'naturalist, intimate film' that depicts the 'real life of these women (prostitutes)'.[555] The Arabic title *Zin Eli fik* signifies 'the beauty inside you' and refers to the 'interiority' of the protagonists that Ayouch aimed at capturing.[556] Similarly to *Les Chevaux de Dieu* (discussed in Chapter Three), Ayouch spent two years in preparation, during which time he interviewed over a hundred prostitutes.[557] To achieve a realistic effect, he filmed on location in Marrakech's nightclubs and villas but also in poor areas and he employed nonprofessional actresses who came from deprived neighbourhoods close to prostitution circles.[558]

Much Loved examines the lives of four Moroccan prostitutes Noha (Loubna Abidar), Randa (Asmaa Lazrak), Soukeina (Halima Karaouane), and Hlima (Sara Elhamdi Elalaoui) living in the same apartment under the patronage of Noha, who organises the encounters with their clients. Randa, in her twenties, is a reluctant prostitute who aims to be reunited with her father in Spain. Soukeina dreams of romantic love, while Noha, the oldest, is her family's breadwinner. Hlima joins the women's group when she meets them at the hospital where Soukeina was admitted after she was beaten up by a wealthy Saudi client. After Soukeina's beating, a drunken Noha throws bottles of beer at the gate of the Saudi house after which she is arrested. Released from the police station, Noha decides to get away from Marrakech

[555] '*Much Loved* Press Kit', Unifrance website <http://medias.unifrance.org/medias/67/66/148035/presse/much-loved-dossier-de-presse-francais.pdf> [accessed 24 April 2017].
[556] Ibid.
[557] '"Much Loved", projeté pour la première fois au Maghreb', *Libération*, 28 November 2015 <https://www.maghress.com/fr/liberation/68953> [accessed 20 November 2017].
[558] '*Much Loved* Press Kit'.

and invites the girls and Said, their driver, to an upscale resort in Agadir, for a few days.

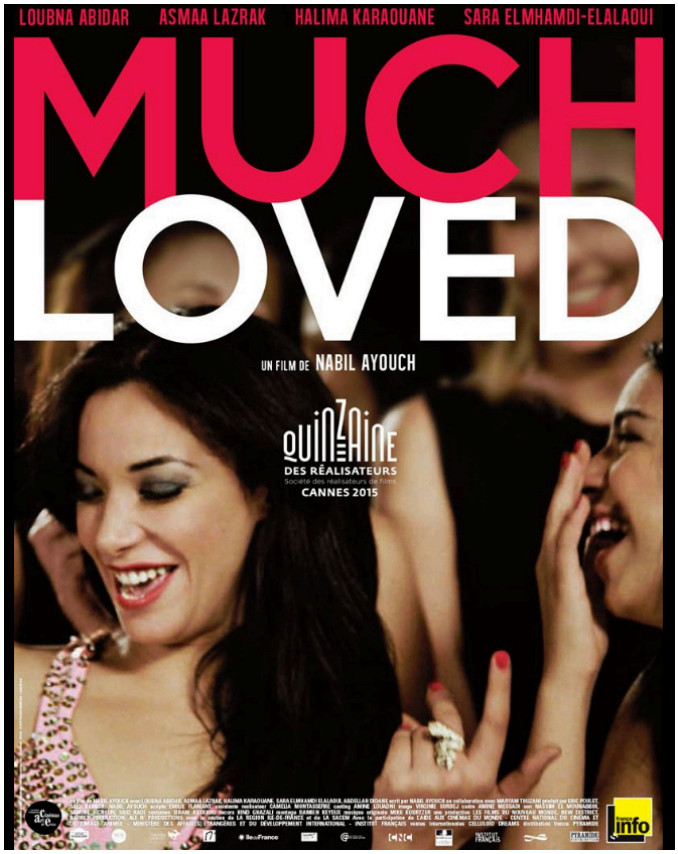

Figure 26. *Much Loved*'s poster with Loubna Abidar in the forefront

While the CCM authorised Ayouch to shoot *Much Loved* in Marrakech, it rejected Ayouch's request for funding, which signals that the CCM was averse to the themes developed in the film. Ayouch eventually gathered 700,000 euros through his production company Ali N Productions, winning investment from French producers, and receiving some funding from the CNC through *L'Aide aux cinémas du Monde*.[559] Ayouch collected four times less than for his previous film *Les Chevaux de Dieu,* the effects of which are evident in *Much Loved*'s hurried editing and the scarcity of outdoor scenes, with the camera immersed in the interior spaces where the protagonists live or work.

[559] '"Much Loved", projeté pour la première fois au Maghreb'.

Upon its premiere at Cannes's *Quinzaine des Réalisateurs*, in 2015, over three hours of *Much Loved*'s rushes were leaked and circulated on social media. One of the rushes reveals the protagonist Noha (Loubna Abidar) naked and performing a sexual act, although this scene was not present in the film. Within a few days, the film became the subject of political protest and heated discussions in Morocco. Many Moroccans considered that *Much Loved* had a documentary value and reflected reality.[560] Some even confused Abidar's role as a prostitute with her real-life persona. The actress Abidar who visually dominates the film was thus called a 'whore' on social media and was the target of death threats and attacks. Some Moroccan journalists labelled her a 'porn actress' who had no shame in exhibiting her nudity.[561]

Ayouch and Abidar were prosecuted by a civil organisation, on charges of 'pornography, public indecency and inciting debauchery', although the trial was dismissed due to a fault in the judicial procedure.[562] Calls were also made by a religious cleric to 'jail Ayouch and Abidar because they seriously damage the moral integrity of the Moroccans'.[563] The controversy reached its peak in November 2015, after Abidar was violently beaten up by three drunken men on Casablanca's streets. Abidar made her attack public and broadcast the injuries inflicted on her in social

[560] Caroline Besse, '*Much Loved* projeté en avant-première: personne au Maroc ne veut voir cette réalité!', *Télérama*, 12 June 2015 <https://www.telerama.fr/cinema/les-marocains-de-france-decouvrent-much-loved-ce-film-c-est-un-documentaire,127913.php> [accessed 20 April 2017].
[561] 'Les Marocains découvrent leur nouvelle star porno: Loubna Abidar', *Actu Maroc*, 2 June 2015 <http://www.actu-maroc.com/Les-Marocains-Decouvrent-Leur-Nouvelle-Star-Porno-Loubna-Abidar/> [accessed 20 April 2017].
[562] Ruth Grosrichard, '"Much Loved" et ses prostituées devant la justice marocaine', *Le Monde*, 15 July 2015 <https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/07/15/much-loved-et-ses-prostituees-devant-la-justice-marocaine_4683475_3212.html> [accessed 20 April 2017].
[563] Carrière, '*Much Loved*: fatwa au cinéma', *L'Express*, 16 September 2015 <https://www.lexpress.fr/culture/cinema/video-much-loved-fatwa-au-cinema_1715994.html> [accessed 13 February 2017].

media. She then left Morocco for France, where she lives now.

Prostitution is prohibited by Moroccan law, and prostitutes are stigmatised and socially marginalised. Scholar Nada Addoum further observes that a 'prostitute is a symbol of transgression of both the law of the state and of patriarchy'.[564] Hence, the heated debate revealed that 'controlled female sexuality is just fine. It is the uncontrolled […] that threatens the social order so distinctly'.[565] Moreover, the women in the film sexually service non-Moroccan men, mainly Saudis and French, further endangering the Moroccan sense of honour and masculinity. Hence the different reactions indicate that the female body is a site that must be tamed and controlled, even if *Much Loved* is a fiction.

The female body and national identity were, thus, at the core of the political debate. Abidar's character was taken by the Moroccan public, and some of the critics, to represent all Moroccan women, and by extension Morocco itself. For instance, the Moroccan Minister of Communication, Mustapha El Khalifi, who is a member the PJD, accused Ayouch's film of 'seriously outraging moral values and distorting the image of Morocco and the Moroccan woman'. [566] El Khalifi's statement indicates that he upholds the patriarchal idea of the sanctity of the nation as depending on the purity of its women. James N. Sater argues that the PJD, indeed, views women as the bearers of tradition against the corrupting influences of the West.[567]

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[564] Nada Addoum, 'Gender and Crime Representations and Constructions of Deviant Femininity in Arab Cinema', *Al Raida,* 113 (2006*),* 55-58 (p. 56).
[565] Don Conway-Long, 'Gender Power and Social Change in Morocco', in *Islamic Masculinities*, ed. by Lahoucine Ouzgane (London: Zed, 2006), pp. 145-160 (p. 146).
[566] Mohammed Etayea, 'Mustapha El Khalfi: "le ministère de la communication doit défendre l'image du Maroc"', *TelQuel*, 26 May 2015.
[567] James N. Sater, 'New Wine in Old Bottles: Political Parties under Mohammed VI', in *Contemporary Morocco: State, Politics and Society under Mohammed VI,* ed. by Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Daniel Zisenwine (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 9-23 (p. 17).

The film's funding and its reception in France were also fiercely discussed by Moroccan journalists. While it is a recurrent theme in the Algerian press that France intervenes and funds films that disfigure Algeria's image, it was the first time the Moroccan press tackled this matter so forcefully. The Moroccan journalist, Bakrim, for instance, considered that the French flood of sympathy was motivated by the Moroccan ban, adding: 'Le message est stupide: un film doit être alors interdit dans son pays pour bénéficier de la charité sympathique des distributeurs'.[568]

For Bakrim, other successful Moroccan films did not circulate in France because they attracted less controversy and did not publicise a degraded image of Morocco.[569] The Moroccan press even considered the film an 'artistic failure' that benefited from the controversy.[570] After the attack, Abidar published an article in *Le Monde* where she explained that she could no longer live in Morocco where she was called 'une pute'.[571] She was then vehemently attacked in the Moroccan press for bringing up issues that would further distort the image of Morocco.[572] In France, *Much Loved* met with instant praise, and received extensive press and television coverage, yet was not a big hit with the public: it gathered 270,000 viewers, which is a good number for a Moroccan film, but is not remarkable for French audiences.[573]

It is noticeable that ten years ago, the Moroccan press defended *Marock* against the PJD who considered it a Zionist film, funded by France, which

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[568] Bakrim, 'Une actrice dans le buzz. Loubna Abidar "réfugiée syrienne"', *Al Bayane*, 16 November 2015 <http://albayane.press.ma/une-actrice-dans-le-buzz.html> [accessed 12 October 2017].
[569] Ibid.
[570] Abdellah Tourabi, 'On a vu Much Loved, voici ce qu'on en pense', *TelQuel*, 1 June 2015 <https://telquel.ma/2015/06/01/on-vu-much-loved-voici-ce-quon-en-pense_1449652> [accessed 12 October 2017].
[571] Loubna Abidar, 'L'Actrice Loubna Abidar: pourquoi j'ai décidé de quitter le Maroc, *Le Monde*, 12 November 2015 <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2015/11/12/pourquoi-j-ai-decide-de-quitter-le-maroc_4807754_3232.html> [accessed 12 October 2017].
[572] Bakrim, 'Une actrice dans le buzz. Loubna Abidar "réfugiée syrienne"'.
[573] Ibid.

dishonoured Morocco by including Jewishness and inter-faith sexual intercourse. In the case of *Much Loved*, surprisingly, some journalists aligned their positions with those of the PJD and claimed that Ayouch gave in to French funders by displaying nudity and female sexuality.[574] Furthermore, none of the film's detractors at this point in the polemic had seen the film, yet they fiercely pilloried it. Indeed, *Much Loved* was banned even before obtaining a visa for distribution. The film's detractors, thus, were the self-appointed guardians of public decency. The French Moroccan writer Leila Slimani who interviewed Nabil Ayouch points at the discrepancy between the ubiquity of prostitution and use of pornography in private and the taboo about talking about it in public.[575] The polemic reveals the anxiety that female sexuality and nudity provoked, as well as the still vivid debate between cinema and national identity.

Having summarised the issues pertaining to prostitution and female sexuality intertwined with national identity, I will now address the linguistic dimensions of the film. Crude and frank language is introduced from the opening scenes which set the film's tone. The opening credits are accompanied by Noha's voice, in *darija*, bluntly categorising men into 'the luxurious one, the medium range one, and the *oueld el kahba* (son of a bitch)', adding that 'one has to acquire the more luxurious one to gain money'. Noha's language objectifies men and contests the view of prostitutes as merely passive. Language allows Noha to speak against her own commodification, and to bring her female voice to the forefront.

The camera then cuts to medium close-ups introducing the protagonists one by one: Randa sniffing drugs, Noha eating, and Soukeina putting on nail polish. The

[574] Ibid.
[575] Leila Slimani, *Sexe et mensonges. La vie sexuelles au Maroc* (Paris: Éditions des Arènes, 2017), pp. 106-110.

women share their sexual experiences and do not shy away from salacious details. Noha remembers a party in Marrakech when she and Randa managed to gain entrance as Randa uttered a few words in English, presumably passing for a tourist. Randa recalls that Noha was 'fucking everywhere and everyone' at the party, to which Noha adds 'my vagina got destroyed by a black dick and I was unable to work for six months'. The three women are simply dressed, in sports outfits, which will become their interior costume, contrasted with the fancy and glittery dresses they put on for work.

In the scene that follows, the three protagonists are dressed up and framed in Said's car by night, heading for work. Noha sits at the front, and the camera focuses on her face. Noha briefs Randa and Soukeina and warns them in *darija*: 'today I want you to show your asses, your legs and hips, understood?' She then asks Randa to perform a '*thamanyatoun*' a figure of eight with her hips and buttocks. Noha also instructs them: 'you sit next to me and if I dance, you dance, if I move, you move and if *nehoui* [I fuck], *tehouiou* [you fuck]'. Said turns a disapproving eye on Noha in response to this speech, and she responds: 'I am a *kahba* (prostitute). Do you want me to speak in *damiati* (high language)?' Noha then adds: 'O God, please provide me with a handsome, rich Saudi, with a little *zeb* [penis)].'

The fast-paced rhythm of the exchanges in the car and the mixture of religious prayer with uninhibited crude language attracted quasi-hysterical responses from Moroccans. Social media viewers labelled the language as '*tayeh*' (low and vulgar), in breach of Islamic morals and social norms.[576] Many Moroccans considered that this language could not be used by women so bluntly and openly

[576] 'Micro trottoir: que pensent les marocains de Much Loved?', Femmes du Maroc online, YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psiqh6RVhsE> [accessed 2 May 2017].

because it was 'improper and dishonourable'.[577] The CCM's director even stated that Ayouch had scorned the CCM, since the dialogues shifted from the initial script, and further condemned the 'verbal violence' of the film.[578] Some Moroccan Francophone journalists claimed that Ayouch had given in to French funders' demands by including vulgar language.[579]

Few Moroccan journalists or critics defended *Much Loved* in relation to its use of language. Moroccan journalist Mehdi Ouessat argued that the debate was polarized between a traditionalist majority who were mostly Arabic-speaking, and a Francophone modernist minority, in favour of individual freedom.[580] Yet YouTube videos were made in *darija* in defence of the film, which indicates that the debate was not clearly divided between Arabic-speaking and French-speaking Moroccans. In one of the videos, a man explains in *darija* that women have the right to speak as they wish, and it is Moroccan society that should be condemned for not acknowledging these women's plight.[581]

For over a year, Ayouch worked with his actresses on theatrical improvisation, so they could 'loosen up' and speak with 'their own words'.[582] The women's vocabulary in the film is filled with slang and with the frequent repetition of vulgar words such as *kahba* (prostitute), *zeb* (penis), *tehoui* (fuck). Ayouch considered that vulgar language increases the naturalistic elements of the film.[583] Furthermore, crude language is shown from the opening scene to be in alignment

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[577] Ibid.
[578] 'Projection du film Much Loved: le CCM interpelle Nabil Ayouch', *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 18 June 2015 <http://aujourdhui.ma/culture/cinema/projection-du-film-much-loved-le-ccm-interpelle-nabil-ayouch-119082> [accessed 13 April 2017].
[579] Bakrim, 'Une actrice dans le buzz. Loubna Abidar "réfugiée syrienne"'
[580] Mehdi Ouassat, 'La Plainte contre "Much loved" tombe à l'eau', *Libération*, 12 February 2016 <http://www.maghress.com/fr/liberation/71612> [accessed 20 April 2017].
[581] 'Micro trottoir: que pensent les marocains de Much Loved?'.
[582] '*Much Loved* Press Kit'.
[583] Ibid.

with the 'authentic' self of Noha, as she claims that she is a prostitute, and this is how she speaks. Vulgar language is hence positioned as an authentic language that expresses the protagonists' self-defined existence. Sadiqi argues that 'the notion of differentiating Moroccan women's language from men's results from the "duality" (men-leader/women-subordinate) stereotype that is deeply rooted in Moroccan culture'.[584] Noha reverses the symbolic male domination and further transgresses gender and social norms by mixing religious prayer with slang and sexual allusions. Furthermore, by using crude language, Noha is opposed to the idea that women are powerless.[585]

The only positive figure of masculinity in the film is Said, a middle-aged man who is part of the enclosed circle of women. Furthermore, Said's masculinity does not threaten the women, instead, he drives them in his car, cooks, runs errands and even distributes condoms to the women before their sexual encounters. Said is a quasi-silent witness of the women's lives, and the external eye that is introduced into their intimate circle. In one scene, Noha is framed at the back of Said's car, after the night she spent with the Saudis. She extracts from her vagina a packet of money that she stole. The package is rolled in plastic, with blood around it, and she hands it to Said who remains stoic. Although in the opening scene Said disapproved of Noha's language he nonetheless remains silent, which emphasises that a Moroccan man is capable of accepting the women's way of life and their speech.

The protagonists' friendship constitutes a key theme of the film. Ayouch employed two cameras to heighten the sense of closeness and bonding between the four women. He also surrounded himself with women technicians, including

[584] Sadiqi, p. 16.
[585] Sara Mills, *Gender and Politeness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 204.

Virginie Surdej (director of photography) and Camilla Montasier (assistant director), so he could achieve a 'sense of intimacy and immediacy that would not have been possible with a male crew'.[586] The handheld camera and numerous close-ups also highlight the social confinement of the protagonists and their disconnection from outside life.

The dim lighting, the night scenes in dirty empty streets, the filming of Marrakech's poor neighbourhoods, and the melancholic non-diegetic music contribute to the gloomy feeling of the protagonists' lives. The location of the women's apartment in a dusty area of Marrakech also metaphorically represents their lives on the fringes of society. In one scene, when Soukeina is in Said's taxi, the camera sweeps over Marrakech in a long shot, and juxtaposes the social differences between cars and cart sellers, as well as exposing the poorly dressed women and beggars. The dirty pavements, the grey sky and images of a decrepit cityscape mark Marrakech as the antithesis of the pleasant touristic destination it is usually seen as. It is only towards the end that the landscape widens, and the panorama includes long shots of a blue ocean under a bright sky, thus offering a visual escape from the city.

The film's exploration of the life and language of prostitutes, who live on the margins of society, extends to transvestite prostitutes. Dressed in bright dresses, with high heels, wigs, and heavy make-up, the transvestites gather at Noha's place to drink alcohol, laugh, and dance. They are framed as frivolous, colourful, free, and portrayed as figures of fun and comic relief. Yet the transvestites are only seen by night on Marrakech's streets to further emphasise their estrangement from society.

[586] Rhonda Richford, 'Cannes: Nabil Ayouch Explores Underbelly of Morocco in 'Much Loved'', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 20 May 2015 <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/cannes-nabil-ayouch-explores-underbelly-797186> [accessed 14 May 2017].

When they meet with Noha, the transvestites share the same crude language, they call each other '*kahba*' (prostitute), and use expletives when addressing each other. Vulgar language is thus used amongst them as a solidarity-based linguistic practice and a 'form of opposition to symbolic domination'.[587] Hence obscene words assert the group's contempt for social morals and resist ostracism as well as allowing them to assert their sexuality. Language is thus used subversively, opening a space for the expression of a different sexuality.

The girls also shelter Hlima who left her town for Marrakech when she got pregnant. In Marrakech, Hlima services Moroccan men on the streets, often for as little as a few euros, or for some vegetables. Hlima's journey to Marrakech is one that many young women from the countryside make in real life. She is an *aaroubiya*, a rural girl who speaks *darija* with a heavy accent and is dressed in a traditional *jellaba*, with a headscarf. Hlim'a accent is grounded in the dialect of rural life and is also used for comic relief in the film. Noha, Randa and Soukeina mock her name and ask her to pick a more distinguished urban name to demarcate herself from her peasant origins. Noha asks her 'do you want to hear "Hlima, fetch the cow": or "Ahlam, please call the chauffeur"?'.

Through attention to Hlima's rural accent, costume and manners, the film's verisimilitude is also realised. Her status as an *aaryoubia* prostitute further marks a significant departure from the glamorised representation of Noha and the girls. Indeed, Hlima addresses men and women equally in vulgar *darija*, while the girls change their way of speech when they are in presence of their clients. Undeniably, the crude language used by Noha, Randa and Soukeina contrasts with the meek,

[587] Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge, 'Introduction: New Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts', in *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge (Clevedon; Buffalo, Multilingual Matters, 2004), pp. 1-33 (p. 11).

passive and feminine language and lascivious postures adopted by them when they entertain the Saudis.

At the Saudis' house where Noha and other women are gathered, the women need to 'present' themselves during a dance competition. In a richly furnished room, the Saudis sit and drink while the women are aligned opposite them. The camera assumes the position of the watching Saudis so that the performance is played directly to the camera. The viewer is thus encouraged temporarily to adopt the viewpoint of the Saudis, whose gaze fixes and commodifies the women while the camera explicitly frames their voluptuous bodies, in tightly fitted, glittery dresses.

Figure 27. Noha at the Saudis' house dancing

Noha dances and is framed from the back performing a '*thamanyathoune*' in a tight pink outfit, moving her hips, accompanied by loud music. She crawls and offers her body as what E. Ann Kaplan describes, talking of women in Hollywood films, a 'spectacle, an object-to-be-looked-at.'[588] The camera focuses on her movements of her hips and buttocks, as well as her seductive smiles, winks, and alluring pouts. The dance sequence both fixes the identity of Noha as a prostitute and reaffirms the power relationship between the Saudis and those who perform under

[588] E. Ann Kaplan, *Women & Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York; London: Routledge, 1988), p. 39.

their gaze. Noha is the object of the Saudis' sexual gaze; she is desirable, but she also needs to masquerade and flatter them. She consciously manipulates her body as well as language to seduce the Saudis. During these gatherings, Noha employs Middle Eastern Arabic, to flatter and praise the Saudis' virility. For instance, she states in colloquial Egyptian '*aadat essaoudiya bitasaoui fiya*' (sitting with the Saudi puts me on fire). Egyptian vernacular is widespread in the Middle East and North Africa, through television series and music, and has dominated Arabic cultural forms.[589] Hence it is no surprise that Noha masters this language. Furthermore, she turns the language into a valuable commodity, using it to seduce the men. She stylises her language by including rhymes and jokes and hyper-feminises her pose. She speaks slowly, smoothly, and frequently accompanies her words by a dance, a suggestive wink, and the camera focuses on her tight outfit while she speaks.

In the gatherings with the Saudis, women are reduced to smiling, dancing, and hardly speaking while the Saudis use language to perform their gender identity. The men are framed gathered, sitting on the floor, eating food with their hands and dressed in traditional white robes with *agals* and *keffiyeh* (traditional headband and a scarf). One of the men eats while speaking, praising the Saudi's financial generosity towards the Palestinians whom he calls 'beggars'. Soukeina, who is at the other end of the group, dressed in a tight black outfit, intervenes: 'poor Palestinians, *haram*, you should not say that. They are deprived of their land'. She is then cut short by a young man who says in his Saudi accent: 'who is this woman? Shut her up'. Noha is framed as she glances back at Soukeina and asks her to stop talking.

[589] Marwan M. Kraidy, 'Arab Satellite Television Between Regionalization and Globalization', *Global Media Journal*, 1.1 (2002), 1-13 (p. 6).

The framing enhances the power that is allotted to the Saudis. They are in the foreground while the women are framed in the background and remain quasi-silent. The men's language, as well, triumphs over the women's speech and proves the power imparted to them. The Saudis do not speak *darija*, further signalling that the men impose their language. Hence, Noha and the other women are compelled to use Middle Eastern Arabic. Using a language the Saudis understand is symbolic of power relations between Moroccan women and Saudi men: the women need to repudiate *darija* while the men maintain their language. In other scenes, gendered power relations are established through money. The men throw money at the women when they dance, placing bills between their breasts and thighs, and women are framed crawling, in underwear, to gather the money the Saudis distribute.

The above-mentioned scenes present clichés of Saudi men whose wealth allows them to consider women as commodities. Furthermore, the scenes highlight the Saudis' double standards; they are traditionally clothed yet entertain prostitutes and drink alcohol, acts that are severely punished in their country. A short-lived illusion that the Saudi men can be courteous and polite is exemplified by Soukeina's experience. She entertains a man who every night declaims *ghazal* – ancient love poetry in Arabic. In one scene, the Saudi man is tightly framed, facing Soukeina, gazing at her with love. After several encounters where he is unable to achieve an erection, the two, framed on a bed, begin watching a pornographic film to get him aroused. Fiddling with the laptop, Soukeina discovers images of naked men, indicating his sexual preference.

Feeling dishonoured, Soukeina hurriedly dresses, wanting to leave. The Saudi asks her why and she replies in a Middle Eastern accent 'you are gay' and that she has '*karama*' (dignity). The man then strongly grabs her and beats her while

repeating in his Saudi accent she is '*gahba*' (*whore)* adding 'you are worth nothing, less than half a cent'. Defenceless, Soukeina endures his violence in silence. The character of the Saudi man points at the contrast between civilised masculinity embodied by the poetry and the violent behaviour he displays. At the same time, the Saudi is also a victim of a culture of macho posturing, religious strictures and endemic double standards.

Although Noha speaks French, she only uses it to gain access to more clients. She does not gain social prestige or power from it, which implies that her social status as a prostitute cannot be overcome. In one scene, Noha, Randa and Soukeina entertain three French men in a nightclub. The middle-aged men are framed together, indistinguishable one from the other, drinking alcohol. One of them says in French 'Ce soir on va baiser' and says to Noha, 'vas-y, montre-nous ton cul'. Soon after, Noha realises that the men do not have enough money and she and the girls leave the nightclub. The three men are angered and throw money at the girls while insulting them 'c'est ça, mets-la dans ta chatte'. The scene emphasises the men's vulgarity and parallels their rudeness with the Saudis' behaviour. Yet none of the abovementioned scenes were deemed controversial or criticised by Moroccan journalists. Their lack of reaction to these scenes implies that it is acceptable for men to have sex and use violence and crude language as long as women are maintained in a subaltern position, linguistically and physically.

The conflation of sex and violence is a critical feature of *Much Loved.* When Noha is arrested, she is brought to the police station where Amine, the policeman she knows, is in charge. Amine rapes her in exchange for her release. She is framed against Amine's desk, clenching her fists, and her expression denotes pain. Amine is afterwards framed with Noha at a coffee place at sunrise, in *Jemaa El Fnaa*, casually

chatting. *Jemaa El Fnaa* is amongst the most visited places in Marrakech, busting with food carts and sellers, yet in this scene, it is framed empty, dirty, under a grey sky, which emphasises Noha's state of mind. Amine asks Noha for more money to dismiss the case and adds 'as for myself I already got paid'. The scene underscores the corruption of the police that profits from the prostitution trade.

The abovementioned scene may remind the Moroccan viewer of another film, *Tabit or not Tabit* (Dir. Nabyl Lahlou, 2006), which exposed a real-life scandal in which the police commissioner Tabet raped over five hundred women while secretly filming his deeds. The film revealed police corruption and was received with cathartic floods of tears and praised for dealing with such a poignant and taboo subject.[590] Yet the abovementioned scene did not provoke any sympathy towards Noha, nor did it raise any debate when it came to discussing the film. This further confirms that the status of the protagonists as sex workers again seemed to justify sexual abuse and violence.

Father figures are markedly absent in the film, while the state does not protect the women, hence the only space in which they feel safe is amongst themselves. The female group becomes a substitute family that comforts and protects, where they find solidarity and where they can freely speak. The female-group and Said become a non-patriarchal family within a patriarchal context; they challenge, resist and defy patriarchy and social marginalisation. Central within *Much Loved* is the relationship between sexuality and individuality, a theme strengthened by the use of crude language. The film presents a compromised, non-triumphalist image of Moroccan masculinity, as well as a liberated female sexuality. *Much*

[590] Boukhari, 'Enquête. Les audaces du nouveau cinéma marocain', *TelQuel*, 25 April 2012.

Loved's most significant challenge to Moroccan cinema, hence, stems from the way it represents female language in connection with sexuality.

Les Jardins de Samira: Samira is in No Paradise

Les Jardins de Samira (2007) is Nabyl Lahlou's third feature film, following a series of public information films for the CCM. Lahlou was born in 1939 and trained at the French *Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques*. His debut feature, *Soleil de printemps* (1969), shot in black and white, was influenced by Italian neorealism and the French New Wave.[591] *Soleil de printemps* examined the misfortunes of a civil servant of peasant origins who cannot adapt to urban life in Casablanca.[592] Armes considers it a cornerstone in Moroccan cinema, as it broke new ground in a radical way through its use of black and white, nonprofessional actors, and tight framing of Casablanca's landscape, insisting on the rapid urbanisation of the city with its housing development, dense crowd, and flow of cars, although at the time of its release it encountered little success with Moroccan audiences.[593]

Les Jardins de Samira reverses the plot of *Soleil de printemps*. It explores the sexual frustration of Samira, a young urban woman from Casablanca trapped in her marriage to Driss, a landowner, who is old. Confined to Driss's house in the countryside, Samira has to nurse Driss's father who has Alzheimer's Disease, receiving help only from Farouk, Driss's young nephew who lives in the house as well. Over time, Samira discovers that her husband is sexually impotent, and she is drawn to Farouk. Samira and Farouk begin a sexual relationship but growing

[591] Armes, *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North African Film*, p. 20.
[592] Ibid.
[593] Ibid.

suspicious of their affair, Driss asks Farouk to leave, and Samira is left alone in the house.

Les Jardins de Samira connects silence with female powerlessness and speech with male power. The three protagonists speak the same *darija*, but language delimits gender roles and power relations: Samira often remains silent, while her husband speaks and is powerful. Samira rarely leaves the house. Meanwhile, Farouk – who is confined to the domestic sphere – is as powerless as Samira and submissive to his uncle's authority. In the household, Driss mainly speaks to prohibit and reprimand; outside the house, he uses language to assert his power and masculinity.

The film begins with Samira's journey as a married woman in Driss's car, leaving her family home and heading to Driss's house. Samira is framed wearing a traditional wedding dress, with the camera focussing on her smile and expensive earrings while non-diegetic joyful music is heard. As the car drives away from Casablanca, the camera brushes the city landscape, passing through the wealthy areas with their neat white buildings, sweeping over empty fields, and reaching Driss's house. The vast and bare landscape contrasts with the closeness of the house and is symbolic of the short-lived illusion Samira will have about her marriage. Samira is to remain in the house and the dreams she had for a better life as a married woman will soon be dispelled. More overtly, the Arabic title of the film, سميرة في الضيعة, bears more meaning than *Samira's Gardens.* الضيعة, *El dayaa* literally translates to the estate it also signifies loss and forfeiture, feelings that Samira will endure.

In stark contrast with *Much Loved'*s highly stylised costumes and fast pace, *Les Jardins de Samira* is a slow-paced film, infused with moments of silence, similar in style to *Soleil de printemps*. Melancholic non-diegetic music, composed by

Emmanuel Binet, underscores Samira's domestic life and boredom. Lahlou raised 200,000 euros from the CCM – an average budget for a Moroccan film, but a modest sum nonetheless – meaning that the lighting is poor at times and the locations limited.[594] Lahlou employed renowned Moroccan singer Sanna Mouazine (Samira), the established film and television actor Mohammed Khouyi (Driss) and the one-time television show host Youssef Britel (Farouk). Khouyi and Britel were praised for their performances and won Best Actor awards at the 2009 Tangier National Film Festival.[595] In 2009, the film's cinema audience reached 47,000 in Morocco, a high number by Moroccan standards as Moroccan films gather averages of 10,000 viewers.[596]

Figure 28. *Les Jardins de Samira*'s poster (title in French and Arabic)

[594] 'Bilan cinématogrpahique 2009'.
[595] Faiçal Faqihi, 'Le 7e art attend son contrat-programme', *L'Économiste*, 26 February 2009, p. 4 <https://www.leconomiste.com/article/le-7e-art-attend-son-contrat-programme> [accessed 13 March 2013].
[596] Ibid.

Gender and space boundaries are visually emphasised in the film. Driss is often shown outside the house, while Samira is confined to domestic tasks within the boundaries of the house. This view of space is in accordance with the Arab-Muslim patriarchy, which is based on 'strict gender-based space dichotomy'.[597] Sadiqi and Moha Ennaji draw upon Fatima Mernissi's work to argue that 'the private space is culturally associated with powerless people (women and children) and is subordinated to the public space, which is culturally associated with men – who dictate the law'.[598] Indeed, in this film, public-private space is where gender identities are distinguished and linguistic power is negotiated.

Although Samira has mastered French, this ability does not empower her. For instance, when she meets Farouk for the first time, he calls her 'Madame', and she replies in French 'enchantée'. Farouk does not understand Samira's words and continues to call her Madame to mark his respect towards his uncle's wife. Sadiqi points out that Moroccan women adopt French 'more readily than men' because it allows them 'social prestige' and social empowerment.[599] However, Driss does not even acknowledge Samira's urban, sophisticated language: he is framed looking at Samira's dress as he does not notice her use of the French 'enchantée'.

[597] Sadiqi and Moha Ennaji, 'The Feminization of Public Space: Women's Activism, the Family Law, and Social Change in Morocco', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 2.2 (2006), 86-114 (p. 88).
[598] Ibid., p. 93.
[599] Sadiqi, *Women, Gender and Language in Morocco*, p. 228.

Figure 29. Samira and Driss in the kitchen upon Samira's arrival at the house

The film is shot in a succession of interiors in Driss's house: the kitchen, the bathroom and the bedroom. The compact, claustrophobic space reflects Samira's state of mind as her freedom of speech and her movements are progressively reduced. On Samira's arrival at the house, Driss tells Farouk, 'From now on *Allah* relieved you from kitchen duty', with Samira silently watching. By using the religious *Allah*, Driss implies that Samira's domestic tasks are sanctioned by religion. Her silence reveals that she has accepted her domestic role as her husband's servant. We see her serve tea, while the two men are seated. As the camera focuses on Driss's central position at the table, it further marks how the space is gendered, confirming Driss's position of power over the household.

Women in the film are rarely present outside the domestic space, with the notable exception of the workers at Driss's farm. The women are dressed in trousers, with their heads covered by hats, while they pick tomatoes. Their costume and framing signal their lower social class and suggest the de-sexualisation and invisibility of these women, as they are framed in the background as mere silhouettes while Driss is in the foreground. On the other hand, Samira's awakening sexual desire is revealed at different moments in the film. For example, she is framed when she meets the village women by the sea, where they gather to perform a religious

ritual, drawing also on pagan practice. The women hang their bras on the coastal rocks and pray to a Saint. Samira's sexual desire is revealed as the camera lingers on her body and her lips, with close-ups of her legs when she stands in the sea. These rituals are the resort of women who are denied power in the real world, so they use whatever means are available to them to attain a measure of control over their destinies. These gatherings also provide moments of respite for Samira, when she gazes back at men who observe the women from afar.

Laura Mulvey's seminal essay of 1975 on the male gaze established that narrative film has manipulated visual pleasure in such a way that it reproduces a pattern of male looking and female 'to-be-looked-at-ness'.[600] In a book of 1988, Kaplan challenged Mulvey's view, arguing that the gaze is 'not necessarily male (literally), but to own and activate the gaze […] is to be in the "masculine" position'.[601] Gaze theory in feminist film criticism also claims that the gaze is entrenched in power relations, divided by those who have the power to look and those who are looked at.

Positioned at Samira's point of view, the camera sweeps across Farouk's body through a series of shots revealing his face, his hands and then his bare chest. Samira acts upon her gaze, and has sexual intercourse with him, contradicting Kaplan's observation that 'women receive and return a gaze but cannot act upon it'.[602] Samira's sexuality and active gaze provide her with a newfound sense of freedom, emphasised by the bright light that surrounds her and Farouk when they are in bed. Her gaze is a source of power and is used in the film as her expression of self-worth: a tool for Samira to claim her own desires, which are otherwise thwarted

[600] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16.3 (1975), 6-18 (p. 8).
[601] Kaplan, *Women & Film: Both Sides of the Camera*, p. 39.
[602] Ibid., p. 31.

by her husband. Through Samira's gaze, a visual distinction is also established between Farouk and Driss. Driss's body is not looked at. Instead, he is fully clothed in traditional outfits, often framed on his own, at a distance from Samira. Unlike Farouk, Driss barely gazes at Samira: his gaze is distant, dispersed, and powerless as if to reveal the symptoms of his sexual impotence.

Despite his impotence, Driss aims at asserting the image of his sexual power, and he uses language to maintain his public persona as a sexually active man. In one scene, Driss describes his wedding night to his male friends. We see his three old friends, dressed in traditional outfits, gathered around Driss in a dimly lit room. The claustrophobic space adds to the sense of intimacy and invites secret revelations. Crudely, Driss reveals in *darija* that, 'The virgin [Samira] brought back my virility,' and that he felt like a 'horse in a Fantasia [horse show]'. He then imitates the screams she allegedly made, adding, 'I violently fucked her, I hurt her, I tore her [virginity] and I almost felt sorry for her'. His friends envy him, and one of them states, 'I wish I could take another wife'. The joking tone that the men adopt when replying to Driss's remarks, and their curious gaze, suggest that they use crude language to assert their masculinity. Driss, too, wishes to regain sexual power through language.

Driss's conversation is addressed to a male-only audience and occurs within the context of marriage. He derives prestige from Samira's virginity, which is proof of his sexual strength. At the centre of Driss's masculinity is his sexuality, and his words indicate that sexual prowess is equated with masculine power. In another scene, he lies to another friend that Samira is pregnant and became difficult to deal with, adding that he is too old to raise a child. Driss's lie allows him to assert his maleness and reverse his sexual impotence.

While the film portrays domestic violence, Driss beats up Samira on many occasions when she questions his sexual impotence, in order to preserve his patriarchal power, Moroccan journalist Najat Faïssal praised the film, somewhat surprisingly, for its balanced representation of Morocco's social realities at the same time as it respects the country's traditions.[603] *Les Jardins de Samira*'s positive reception amongst the Moroccan public also indicates that Moroccan audiences can accept images of female sexual desire, even for a woman outside the boundaries of marriage, although these features are made 'acceptable' as by the end of the film, Samira's extra-marital affair is ended and Farouk leaves the house. This reception of *Les Jardins de Samira* is in stark contrast to the reception of *Much Loved*.

In the film, religious power – never far dissociated from patriarchal power – also thrives on language and sanctions Samira's sexuality. In one scene, Samira's father and Driss seal the wedding by reciting *Al Fatiha* (the opening verse of the Quran). The two men, similar in age and costume, sit in the living room, which emphasises their closeness and shared power. The women of the house are kept at a distance, visually and physically; they are framed as mere silhouettes at the room's entrance. The scene demonstrates the religious and legal power conferred on Samira's father to sanction her marriage, as well as the limited space given to women in religious and legal matters.

Like her father, Samira's mother perpetuates patriarchal power through language. In the opening scene, when Samira is introduced, her mother's voice-over in *darija* enumerates what Samira will gain by marrying Driss. The mother idiomatically expresses that Driss is from 'a good lineage' and 'your father has

[603]Najat Faïssal, 'Youssef Britel: "le personnage de Farouk a marqué le public"', *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 23 October 2007 <http://aujourdhui.ma/culture/youssef-britel-le-personnage-de-farouk-a-marque-le-public-52507 >[accessed 12 March 2017].

checked his background'. She adds that Driss is rich and will provide Samira with stability and economic certainty. The voice-over implies that the mother is the mouthpiece of tradition and patriarchal order, and that Samira has neither agency nor power to resist the command of her parents. By the end of the film, Samira is framed walking alone in a public garden where she sees a man and a woman, who are followed by a little girl. The scene emblematizes Samira's loneliness and what Samira is deprived of: a loving husband, and a happy life.

Les Jardins de Samira oscillates between transgression – in its treatment of sexual intimacy, female desire and the gaze– and conformity, while dealing with Samira's domestic life and Driss's power. Driss, has maintained through language masculine honour and power inside and outside the household – even though it is a mere front. The film also exposes Samira's fragile position in society, helpless, unable to fully live her sexuality. Hence, language cannot liberate Samira from the constraints and norms of society, and the film's ending is sympathetic to Samira, she is framed sitting alone outside the house, contemplating her surroundings, left with Driss's father who cannot speak; the house becomes Samira's jail.

Agadir Bombay: Happy Ending is Only for The Virtuous Woman

Like *Les Jardins de Samira*, the Moroccan feature *Agadir Bombay* (2011) does not allow women to free themselves from patriarchy, to openly live their sexuality, and to find empowerment through language. As in *Les Jardins de Samira*, *darija* is used only to perpetuate patriarchal values and leaves women powerless. *Darija* in this film is sanitised and normalised to reinforce gender and moral boundaries, and spoken language only reaffirms the standardised view of women as powerless and guardians of morality, and marriage as the women's ultimate purpose.

The plot concentrates on Imane, a 14-year-old teenager who lives in Taroudant, a small town in southern Morocco. While Imane's family prepares for her cousin's wedding, she must collect jewels from her grandmother's house, but she loses them on her return home. Her parents shout at her, so she runs and hides, later to be found by her neighbour's daughter Leila. Leila, who is in her thirties, lives in Agadir and is visiting her sick mother. She takes Imane to Agadir for the day to forget about the events, and later brings her to a house party, where a rich industrialist, Mounir Absi, is being entertained in advance of a business deal. It is revealed then that Leila is a prostitute, though Imane had thought she was a child-carer. Leila's aim, at the beginning of the film, is to get married to Rachid, her pimp, and to have a domesticated life. She previously sacrificed herself, by working as a prostitute, to help her mother and sister after their father left them. During the house party, Mounir sees Imane and covets her; Rachid, takes Mounir Absi to Imane's room. Absi tries to force himself on her but – Imane, not understanding what is happening at first – ends up stabbing him with a fork and escaping. By the end of the film, Leila is in jail, as she called the police to rescue Imane and was imprisoned for prostitution, and Imane has become a baker's apprentice, which was what she always wanted to do.

While *darija* is predominant in the film, there are no traces of *Tashelhit*, the Berber language spoken in Taroudant and its region.[604] Since the director Myriam Bakir was born in Morocco but raised in France, she may not be fluent in the language. The dominance of *darija* on the other hand allowed the film to achieve commercial success and to be broadcast on the Moroccan television station 2M. The

[604] Sadiqi, 'The Place of Berber in Morocco', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 123.1 (1997), 7-21 (p. 13).

absence of Berber means that the film is not entirely authentic, while the dominance of *darija* maintains the status quo for women, as I will further elaborate.

Agadir Bombay is the first feature, as writer and director, of the French Moroccan Bakir, who received 500,000 euros from the CCM and 2M for the film.[605] The significant funding indicates that, despite the film's prostitution subject matter, the film was not deemed morally threatening by Moroccan state authorities – unlike *Much Loved* which did not receive any state funding. *Agadir Bombay* also met with critical and commercial success in Morocco upon its release, ranking as the 4th film in the first quarter of 2012 with 16,426 tickets sold, a significant number for a Moroccan feature.[606]

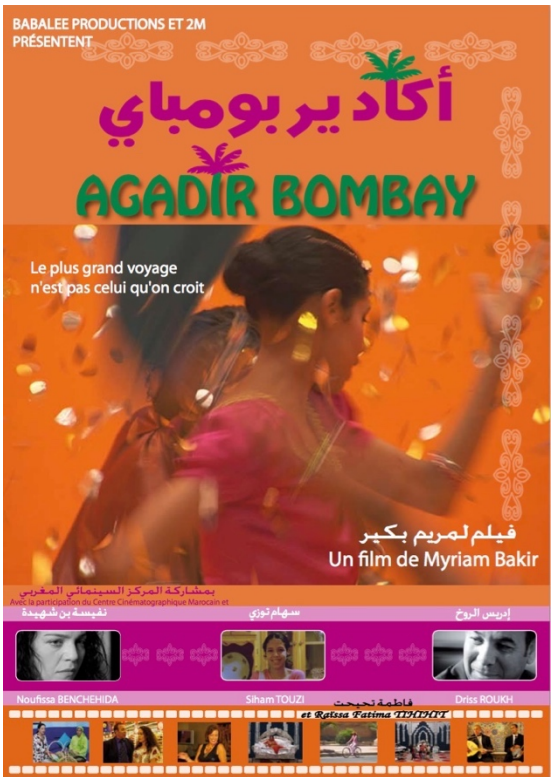

Figure 30. *Agadir Bombay*'s poster (title in French and Arabic)

[605] Fatima Ezzahra Saadane, 'Interview: Myriam Bakir, réalisatrice d'Agadir Bombay. J'ai opté pour la comédie pour faire passer le message', *Les Eco*, 25 January 2011 <https://www.maghress.com/fr/lesechos/449> [accessed 12 May 2017].
[606] 'Box office des films marocains. 1er trimester année 2012', CCM website <http://www.ccm.ma/inter/phactualite/boxem.pdf> [accessed 4 August 2017].

Imane is at the centre of the film and is the explicit narrator through her voice-over. She speaks in rural *darija*, which is distinct from the urban *darija* used in Casablanca, and provides authenticity to her character, who is played by a non-professional actress from Taroudant. Imane is associated with the 'voice of the truth' as she addresses the audience and expresses her desire to leave Taroudant, where she feels constrained by her surroundings. She is frustrated because adults do not take her seriously. Imane's narration provides a 'frame for interpretation' of the events we see her experience.[607] Kozloff argues that with a first-person narration, the viewer assumes the narrator's point of view and 'embraces the character as the principal story teller'.[608] The camera also provides Iman's visual point of view as most of the film is framed from her point of view.

Agadir Bombay references Bollywood in more than one way: its title, colour composition, and characterisation of the protagonists. The film's title draws a link with Bollywood and juxtaposes two cities that represent Imane's dreams: she wants to escape from Taroudant for Agadir; at the same time, she loves Bollywood films. Her walls are covered with Bollywood film stars, and she is a fan of the Indian actor Shah Rukh Khan. The film's moral conclusion also parallels Bollywood films, as morality is safeguarded and 'pure' women maintain their virtue. Through Imane's persona, and in the same manner that Bollywood films are 'updated and manipulated to ultimately reinforce conventional gender constructions', *Agadir Bombay* promotes a renewed commitment to the family and marriage ideals.[609]

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[607] Clodagh Brook, 'Beyond Dialogue: Speech-Silence, the Monologue, and Power in the Films of Ermanno Olmi', *The Italianist*, 28.2 (2008), 268-280 (p. 275).
[608] Kozloff, *Invisible Storytellers: Voice-Over Narration in American Fiction Film* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1988), p. 49.
[609] Anne Ciecko, 'Superhit Hunk Heroes for Sale: Globalization and Bollywood's Gender Politics', *Asian Journal of Communication*, 11.2 (2011), 121-143 (p. 128).

The references to Bollywood extend to the film's music, aesthetics and characters. The film's non-diegetic music is a mixture of Moroccan rhythm and Indian music and the camera emphasises clean lines, clean streets and bright costumes which compete for domination. Imane is dressed mainly in pink, and each character is similarly assigned a colour: Imane's mother is green, Imane's sister is purple, and to signal that Leila is a prostitute but still aims at love, her bed has red sheets, she has red flowers and even her dress at the party is red. The film also over-simplifies its characters: they are stereotypes, from the villain Rachid, to Imane the pure at heart, to Leila the fooled, who thought Rachid was in love with her and would marry while he was exploiting her. The dialogue is delivered in an over-rehearsed manner, the effect of which is that the film resembles a television soap opera.

The Moroccan journalist Youssef Ait Hammou has argued that Moroccans' infatuation with Bollywood stars and dramatic narratives, and especially Bollywood music and choreography, has shaped a Moroccan cinematic imagination that, for a generation, has gradually replaced local myths and legends with Bollywood tropes.[610] Bollywood, for Ait Hammou, has created a real counter-power in response to the intensive Westernization and secularisation of the imaginary in the late 1980s.[611] Furthermore, Standard Arabic – not French – is the language used for Bollywood films' subtitles when these films are screened in Morocco. Moreover, Bollywood films are more linked, visually and linguistically, to Egyptian film production, with its music, dance and safeguard of morals, than to Western film. Imane is a fan of Bollywood and the romance and escapism it offers. Bollywood

[610] Youssef Ait Hammou, 'Aspects d'une bollywoodophilie marocaine', *Albayane*, 8 December 2014 <https://www.maghress.com/fr/albayane/123960> [accessed 12 May 2017].
[611] Ibid.

films further reinforce her moral values as she longs for romantic films devoid of sexual representation.

Marriage as a safeguard of morality is a recurrent theme in the film. Leila's mother, Fatima, watches a Moroccan television show, in French, that features 'les meilleurs moments de couples mariés'. On the television, a woman dressed in a traditional *kaftan* is shown with her husband. Fatima watches the television show with a *misbah* in her hand, her head covered as if approaching the show with moral caution. French, in this instance, emphasises the social and religious importance of marriage and is associated with moral purity.

An opposition between honour and shame is further highlighted as scenes of Imane's cousin's wedding in Taroudant and the party in Agadir take place at the same time. The wedding is in a modest courtyard. Traditional music by men dressed in traditional costumes is played, women are gathered, also dressed in traditional outfits, and dance separated from the men. The bride is completely veiled and will only be seen by her husband. The scene is one of cultural tradition and community. At the house in Agadir, on the other hand, music from Egypt and the Arabic Gulf is played; any Moroccan songs are modern ones, in contrast to the folk music at the wedding. The members of the orchestra are dressed in Western suits, and scantily clad women mingle and dance with men who drink alcohol. In another scene, two prostitutes are filmed in a bedroom with a drunken client from whom they steal money and whose wife they rudely taunt over the phone.

As mentioned, Standard Arabic is used to subtitle Bollywood films. As such, the language allows Imane and Leila to enjoy those films, and thus provide an opening to other cultures. Yet Standard Arabic is also linked to deceit and corruption. Upon Imane's return from Agadir, all the members of the family are

gathered for breakfast and the radio is on. On the radio, in Standard Arabic, can be heard news of Mounir Absi's recovery after Imane assaulted him. The radio announces that Absi suffered from a mild disease, thus not revealing that he was stabbed at a party. The news describes Absi as a benefactor, a generous donator to charities; only the viewer is aware of his real identity, as neither Imane nor her parents know his name. Standard Arabic becomes associated with deceit, and the scene suggests that the official language and the media cannot be trusted as they are used to conceal Morocco's political corruption. Hence, the rural Moroccan family remains the only place where one can feel protected or live in wilful ignorance.

Sur la planche: Women on the Verge of a Social Breakdown

Like *Much Loved*, *Sur la planche* tells the stories of four protagonists – Badia (Soufia Issami), Imane (Mouna Bahmad), Nawal (Nouzha Akel) and Asma (Sara Betiou) – from a low social class, living in Tangier. The film turns its attention to the dark underworld of the Tangier of globalisation, to women who are on the margins; Badia the protagonist, uses quick slang which empowers her and frees her from the prohibitions and linguistic norms of her social environment. Through language, Badia affirms her social existence and rejects the alienation she experiences as a factory worker.

The plot revolves around Badia and Imane who peel shrimps at a factory and steal from men with whom they have sexual relations. At a party, they meet Asma and Nawal, two textile factory workers, and the four young women decide to team up in robbing men they have sex with. Nawal suggests to Badia that they steal iPhones from the house of a local mafia boss. Badia agrees and commits the robbery with Imane; they pack the phones and Imane spreads kerosene in the house to burn it

down and to cover their tracks. Badia is splashed by the kerosene and heads to the bathroom to wash it off. Imane enters the bathroom to warn Badia that the house is on fire, but then decides to leave. Badia is arrested by the police while she is in the shower; meanwhile, the three other girls are shown outside the house uncaught by the police. The film begins with Badia's arrest, and her voice-over recalls the events of the previous weeks that led to her arrest.

Figure 31. *Sur la planche*'s poster

Badia often speaks in monologues and mutters her words in slang *darija.* She speaks in a hastened manner that sounds at times like slam poetry. Kilani detailed her work with Soufia Issami (Badia) who had to carefully rehearse her text to obtain the effect of the quick rhythm of slam.[612] Issami had to listen to rap music and Quranic scansion (the recitation of Quranic verses), and to replicate the rhythm of Moroccan storytellers. Kilani also made the decision that the protagonists would use

[612] '*Sur la planche* Press Kit', Épicentre films website <https://www.epicentrefilms.com/fichier/105/ dossier_de_presse.pdf> [accessed 28 August 2017].

a language that is hybrid, malleable and reflective of the street language of today's Morocco – a language that is curtailed, mangled and interspersed with Berber, French, Spanish and invented words.[613]

At moments Badia's language is even close to *verlan*, the French 'back slang' that involves (sometimes complex) syllable inversion and a language associated with 'tough street culture', which makes it at times according to sociolinguist Meredith Doran 'socially off-limits for females'.[614] Reversing Doran's stance, Badia's verlan and slang allow her to be fearless, streetwise and empowered. For Florence Martin and Patricia Caillé, the film explores 'how and to whom the subaltern speaks in the era of global capitalism'.[615] Indeed, Badia, who is the 'subaltern', mainly wants to escape from her situation as a shrimp worker and to take advantage of consumer society to improve her social condition. For her, stealing is one option, among others, while language justifies her acts to herself and others.

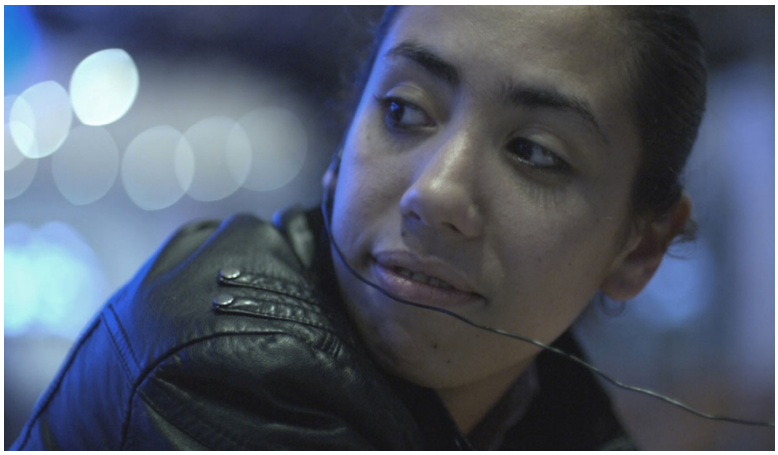

Figure 32. Badia dressed in a leather jacket.

[613] Ibid.
[614] Meredith Doran, 'Negotiating Between Bourge and Racaille: Verlan as Youth Identity Practice in Suburban Paris', in *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2004), pp. 93-124 (p. 100).
[615] Patricia Caillé and Florence Martin, 'Reel Bad Maghrebi Women', in *Bad Girls of the Arab World*, ed. by Nadia Yaqub and Rula Quawas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), pp. 167- 184 (p. 173).

Sur la planche is Kilani's first feature film. Born in 1970 in Casablanca, she now lives in France. She began her career as a historian before turning to cinema, and she had previously directed three documentaries, each with a political bearing. *Tanger, le rêve des brûleurs* (2002) deals with illegal immigration; *Zed Moultaka Beyrouth retrouvé* (2003) portrays a Lebanese musician who reconciles Arabic orality with his Western lifestyle in Lebanon, and *Nos lieux interdits* (2008) tackles the 'Lead Years' under Hassan II. Kilani gathered one million euros of film funding, the largest contribution coming from the CCM, and the remainder from the French *Fonds Sud Cinéma*.[616] While the budget seems sizeable for a Moroccan film, it mainly allowed for the construction of the shrimp factory set and on-location shooting in Tangier.[617] The actresses are non-professionals, and the crew is mixed Moroccan and French. The film was widely acclaimed in festivals, selected at the Cannes *Quinzaine des Réalisteurs* in 2011, and the Dubai, Oslo and Taormina film festivals, but it did not win a large audience in Morocco, gathering 11,531 tickets in 2012, a number similar to *Agadir Bombay*.[618]

Sur la planche references film noir and its tropes; it combines a gloomy ambiance, flashbacks and a voice-over. Like Moknèche, Kilani chose Tangier as the location of the film for its connection to film noir as a city of 'permanent tension'.[619] Kilani wrote the script with Abd-El Hafed Benotma, a French Algerian writer of noir

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[616] 'Cinéma 2012 des critiques du Monde: "Sur la planche" au palmarès', *Libération*, 24 December 2012 <https://www.libe.ma/Cinema-2012-des-critiques-du-Monde-Sur-la-Planche-au-palmares_a33391.html> [accessed 16 June 2016]. Kilani also gathered funds from the German World Cinema Fund and a fund for post-production from Abu-Dhabi Film festival.
[617] '*Sur la planche* Press Kit'.
[618] 'Bilan cinématographique 2010', CCM website <http://www.ccm.ma/ inter/bilans/2-bilan.pdf> [accessed 20 August 2017].
[619] Ghizlane Badri, 'Sur la planche, la réalité d'un conte moderne', *Les Eco*, 29 October 2012 <https://www.maghress.com/fr/lesechos/26824> [accessed 7 July 2016].

novels, who was imprisoned for bank robberies when he was younger.[620] The film's style is less plot-driven than a film noir, and is disjointed, with long takes, a slow rhythm and an emphasis on mood and subjectivity.

Badia's use of slang *darija*, combined with the film's style and its recourse to nonprofessional actors, creates an impression of truthfulness and lends the film a 'documentary' style. To capture the expression of the protagonists and the tension that runs through the film, Kilani worked with a reduced team and used a hand-held camera that facilitated close-ups, allowing for a visual and physical proximity with the protagonists. The close framing, for example, highlights the confinement of Badia, the dingy room where she lives and her deprived conditions as a worker. The camera also often tracks her in extreme close-ups and concentrates on her tense unsmiling face, on parts of her body and her quick gestures. The camera circles around Badia, which gives the impression of constant movement, and corresponds to the speed of her words. The film's music composed by Wilfried Blanchard adds to the feel of a disjointed narrative as the music combines acoustic and electronic sounds and there are no songs but only sounds and beats that accompany the movements of the young women in the city.

The film is also characterised by its contrast of low-light close-ups with starkly lit scenes, an opposition of colours that gives an impression of hyperrealism. The black night of Tangier is opposed to the white, neon-lit shrimp factory. The factory is filmed as a vast space, captured by a long shot that shows the workers all dressed in white – white gloves, white hats, white overalls. The long shot displays the mass of workers, all women in a clinical space that seems soulless, and the

[620] '*Sur la planche* Press Kit'.

images render a stifling atmosphere with the deafening noise in the factory. The white factory is contrasted with the dim city of Tangier, mainly filmed in the rain and at night. During these nocturnal scenes, even the protagonists are indistinguishable. The cinematography also avoids the predictable scenes of the historic town and the sea, instead focusing on the underbelly of the city, on unfinished buildings and deprived areas.

Figure 33. The shrimp factory where Badia and Imane work

Badia wears no makeup; she sometimes dresses in a white shirt and black leather jacket, other times in a *jellaba* (traditional dress) when she goes out or to work. Unlike the other characters she is 'masculinised', to distinguish her from Asma and Nawal, who wear makeup and fancy clothes. Badia's costume indicates that she does not play the game of feminine seduction. While *Sur la planche* is not a documentary, Badia's language and costume, as well as the close framing, provide the viewer with an impression of being confined. Badia's movements are closely tracked, she is filmed when she hurriedly eats, when she showers, at work, all elements which render the viewer familiar with Badia's surroundings.

Badia repeats that the only truth is her own truth. One of her ways to exist is through her words and her credo in *darija*: 'I do not steal; I get a refund. I do not

burglarise; I get my due. I do not traffic; I do business. I do not prostitute myself; I invite myself'. She also repeats to herself and to the other three girls, 'gad el foum gad edraa' ('as much as the mouth speaks the arm has to act'). Badia's latter words indicate the importance she gives to acting upon what she says. Through these words, Badia tells herself and the viewer her truth. Through language she constructs her social persona and claims that she is entitled to a better life.

Badia is indeed frustrated with her lot as a shrimp worker: she lies to Asma and Nawal when she meets them, claiming that she is a textile worker. She considers that textile workers belong to a more prestigious social class as these workers operate in the free port zone. The free port zone provides a first glimpse into Europe and entrance into a global economy to which Badia is denied access. She manages to make her way through the area, where permission and papers are needed to enter, to meet Asma and Nawal, to keep up the pretence that she works there. She even tells a taxi driver, too, that she works there and that even state officials need a passport to enter the free zone. Through these lies, Badia constructs an alternative reality, and the language she uses allows her to assert herself and convince others.

Once Nawal and Asma have found out that she is a shrimp worker, Badia feels humiliated and runs away from them, crying. Visually, the textile workers Nawal and Asma assert their social superiority through costume, language, and make-up. They are feminized even through language, as Asma states in French she works as a 'modéliste', a word Imane does not understand. Badia understands the word but cannot reply in French, so language, along with conventional markers of femininity, indicates the social difference between Badia and Imane on one side and Nawal and Asma on the other side.

In one scene, at the factory, Badia repeats that she is on the edge and is ready to jump. Her words indicate her desire to get away from her situation and they are often accompanied by physical activity, such as running and jumping against a wall. Badia aims at remaining untouched by her condition as a shrimp worker. She packs her clothes in plastic containers to avoid contamination by the smell, she is closely filmed scrubbing her body with mint and soap and washing her face with lemon. Badia peels herself as if peeling shrimps, and aims at escaping from herself: she states, 'one must moult'.

While Badia is surrounded by sounds, in the factory, at the pension, and in the street, she remains isolated from the other workers. She even exerts control over Imane, her only friend, by forbidding her to mingle with the other workers in the factory, who have different ambitions in life. She is also disappointed that Imane appreciates Nawal and Asma. Badia does not trust anyone. Her family are never mentioned in the film. The only mother figure is the pension's owner, a lady who tries to control Badia's movements in and out of the pension, by questioning her and telling her she cannot go out as frequently as she wishes. Yet Badia rejects her intrusion and concern, shouting at her. Similarly, her boss at the factory, a man, asks her to become a recruiter. She rejects his authority, stating: 'I am not a *kawada* [a pimp]'. Badia is conscious of the alienation of working in a shrimp factory; the workers are further dehumanised by the numbers they must wear on their white blouses, which become their names in the factory.

Badia also refuses to be subjected to male authority, or to the men she encounters in cafes and whom she follows in their cars. These men are mere silhouettes, and the interaction with them is limited to sexual encounters. Badia mainly interacts with shop owners who buy from her the stolen goods. It is men who

make Badia conscious that she cannot sell the iPhones she stole as her clothes reveal her social class and indicate that she obtained the phones illegally. This is why she teams up with Nawal and Asma for the final stunt, as without them she cannot make a profit from the stolen phones. Her language and bravado find a limit since she is not able to sell the phones and overcome her social condition as a lower-class worker.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Butler suggests that gender identity is performed, and is constituted by the everyday expressions of speech, utterance, gestures, dress codes and representations.[621] To what extent do Butler's views apply to Badia when she uses *darija* as part of her performance? It is true that through a 'stylized repetition of acts' Badia, using lewd language and slang, performs her identity.[622] She deploys her language in very different ways to Noha (in *Much Loved*), even though they both use *darija* as a means to resist and overcome their disenfranchisement. Badia refuses to conform to stereotyped femininity and sexuality, and makes the language her own, composing her speech like slam poetry as she performs her chosen identity. Through language, Badia excludes herself from the group of shrimp workers and from society at large, and instead builds a fearless persona. Yet her performance is constrained by her social class and environment. In the end, she has little agency, and is caught up by her condition as a poor worker. Hence Butler's account of gender performativity finds its limit within Badia's social and class condition.

Upon the release of the film in Morocco, Badia's character was the subject of heated debates. Her language was perceived by the Moroccan public, upon the film's

[621] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, pp. 191–193.
[622] Ibid., p. 140.

premiere, as unusual as it defied gender norms imposed on women's speech; according to those norms, women are to remain polite or even silent.[623] Kilani observed that the public was divided between those who praised Badia for her use of expletives and brave behaviour in defying social norms and those who rejected her behaviour and found her unsympathetic.[624] Kilani noticed that the questions of sexuality were not of importance to the Moroccan public because there were no clear scenes of nudity.[625] That Badia's language dominated the discussion around the film proves that gender performance through language is still problematic for a part of the Moroccan public.

Algeria's Men and Women: Status Quo of Gender Roles?

Le Harem de Madame Osmane: The *mujahida* Comes Back

Le Harem de Madame Osmane (2000) is Nadir Moknèche's first feature. The film is centred on Algiers in 1992 at the beginning of the Black Decade; and Madame Osmane is an authoritative figure who rules over her tenants and family, mostly women, whom we follow on their journey. The film is conceived as a *huis clos* of women and Moknèche makes distinctive use of space by confining the protagonists to only a few locations within a limited area. The title of the film alludes to the space in which Madame Osmane controls the women of the house, the *harem*. The word is derived from Arabic *hareem* which means women and designates the space where

[623] Renaud de Rochebrune, 'Leila Kilani: au Maroc les réactions à 'Sur la planche' sont passionnelles', *Jeune Afrique*, 6 February 2012, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/143029/culture/leela-kilani-au-maroc-les-r-actions-sur-la-planche-sont-passionnelles/ > [accessed 2 August 2017].
[624] Ibid.
[625] Ibid.

women and concubines live, and it is also associated with *haram* which means the space forbidden to men.

The use of French by women in the film corresponds with greater power for them and freedom from both state and patriarchal power. While *darija* is mainly absent from the film, French allows Madame Osmane to assert power in her house but also outside the house. Shot in Tangier, the city of Algiers is nevertheless very much present in *The Harem of Madame Osmane.* The film was shot in 2000 in Morocco, a substitute for Algeria, for reasons associated with security concerns and logistics, as it was difficult to film in Algeria just after the Black Decade while terrorist attacks were still occurring. Due to the state of Algerian cinema in 2000, there were also limited material means and film professionals in Algeria. Algiers, in the film, is rendered via a combination of shots that capture the atmosphere and set the landscape of the city space as a background. Making use of natural lighting, Moknèche multiplies the use of close-ups to enhance the protagonists' emotions and accentuates the closeness of on-screen visual space. Only one long shot by the sea brings a breathing space for the protagonists, who for a moment can dance and move freely.

Everything revolves around Zhor Bouchama who is known and called by her *nom de guerre*: *Madame Osmane*, the name she chose during the Algerian war. She rents out parts of her house and lives with her daughter Sakina, who is twenty-five. Madame Osmane is played by Spanish star Carmen Maura, one of the recurrent actresses in Pedro Almodovar's films. Maura stated that her memory of her mother's severity, under the Franco dictatorship era in Spain, allowed her to impersonate

Madame Osmane.[626] Meriem (Biyouna), the maid, is middle-aged and unmarried, and portrayed as extravagant and obsessed with men. The tenants include Madame Costa, an old French woman and Kheira, a forty-year old woman who lives with her younger lover Sid Ali. There is also a married couple, Yasmine and Mohand and their young daughter Kahina. Finally, there is M. Estoriaros, a foreigner who works in Algiers. Through the diversity of the characters, Moknèche draws our attention to the composition of an Algerian society that was soon to disappear as most foreigners left Algeria when the era of terrorism began. Madame Osmane claims that her duty is to maintain the honourable reputation of the house, in the absence of the men of the family; her husband had left for France where he kept a French mistress; her son followed to escape military service.

While these women live under the curfew and the surveillance of Madame Osmane, Sakina escapes with the tenant Yasmine; they go out and vent their frustrations after tensions occurred during a wedding attended by all the women of the house. At the wedding, Madame Osmane met the mother of Sakina's fiancé and cancelled the engagement because the mother was of a lower social class. Yasmine, a French-born Algerian, has discovered at the wedding that her husband has a second wife and a son. At the end of the film Sakina dies, shot at a *faux barrage* – a checkpoint established by terrorists. However, Madame Osmane believes that her daughter was in fact shot by the military at the checkpoint. Madame Osmane's husband, who left for France, comes back to bury his daughter.

As a *mujahida*, Madame Osmane does not conform to the nationally constructed myth of *mujahidates*. Historian Ryme Seferdjeli describes how the

[626] Djamila Addar, 'Le Harem de Madame Osmane: Interview Amazigh Montréal', Ksari website <https://www.ksari.com/index.php/nouvelles/n-entretiens/214-le-harem-de-madame-osmane-interview-amazigh-montreal> [accessed 12 April 2014].

mujahidates are portrayed as a 'monolithic group in contrast to male combatants and reduced to the status of a single female figure who is defined almost exclusively by her gender and nationalist identity'.[627] Madame Osmane is a bourgeois figure who trades on her status and privileges as a *mujahida* to acquire wealth. She is only concerned with money and property and seems to be far removed from national concerns.[628] Her husband, a *mujahid*, a man she chose to marry while she was fighting, leaves her for France, the nation that they were fighting against – doubly betraying his wife and his country. He also represents the elite who were able to leave for France when terrorism erupted and were granted a visa, which was difficult at that time since France restricted access, only favouring business men and members of the *nomenklatura*.[629]

Madame Osmane perceives herself as being from a relatively high social class and this is reflected in the way she talks about the mother of her daughter's fiancé with contempt, because she is a traditional woman, in a traditional outfit, and has a *washm* – a traditional tattoo that some women used to have.[630] The irony is that the tattoo is dismissed, both by Islamists as not complying with Islamic precepts that forbid any symbols (many of the tattoos are crosses), and by modernists, who view it as inscribed in old traditions. It cannot be said that Madame Osmane is a modernist.

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[627] Seferdjeli, 'Rethiking the History of the *Mujahidat* During the Algerian War', p. 246.
[628] The status of *mujahidin* allowed privileges in post-independence Algeria such as housing, medical care, and tax reductions on imported goods. A Ministry of *Mujahidin* was established after independence.
[629] Esprit, 'La Politique française de coopération vis-à-vis de l'Algérie: un quiproquo tragique', *Esprit*, 208.1 (1995), 153-161 (p. 160).
[630] Although the significance of the tattoos is not known, many women from the mountainous regions (mainly Chaouia) wore it on their forehead, allegedly as a marker for femininity. It may also have been encouraged by men who were also protective of women during the colonial era or used to mark which tribe women belonged to, to protect them or to differentiate social classes. T. Rivière and J. Faublée, 'Les Tatouages des Chaouias de l'Aurès', *Journal de la société des Africanistes*, 12 (1942), 67-80 <http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/jafr_0037-9166_1942_num_12_1_ 2525#> [accessed 11 November 2014].

She is a conservative figure who disapproves of inter-class marriage. She even warns Yasmine against returning to France where she would have a lower social status than in Algeria: 'Tu vas faire quoi? Caissière?'. French, in the film, is therefore associated with urban upper-middle class women who use it when socialising and as a social marker.[631]

Madame Osmane is also often framed unsmiling, arguing with her tenants and one of the few instances where Madame Osmane is filmed smiling and in an open space, under a bright sun, is when she encounters her lover Sid Ali on the rooftop. Sid Ali lives with Kheira, the only woman from the *harem* who works and gets out; and Madame Osmane meets him when Kheira is away. Yet Madame Osmane continuously harasses Kheira about her relationship with Sid Ali, asking her 'vous êtes mariés? Où est le livret de famille?'. On the rooftop, Sid Ali expresses his sexual desire and gets naked in front of Madame Osmane after she refuses the kisses he gives her. Yet she reins in her sexual desire, stating in French 'Non Sid Ali, non', as she is constrained by the norms she imposed upon the household.

Figure 34. Madame Osmane and Sid Ali on the terrace

[631] Reem Bassiouney, *Arabic languages and linguistics* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012), p. 124.

The final scene, discussed below, is a pertinent illustration of the relationship between gender, language and power. Army officers bring Sakina's coffin to the house. The shot is taken from outside the house, from the location where the coffin is laid on the ground. The bright sun is juxtaposed with the tragic situation. One of the army officers asks if this is Bouchama's house (Bouchama is Madame Osmane's husband's name), and Meriem replies: 'non, ici c'est la maison Osmane', which confirms Madame Osmane's legitimate authority over the household. The army officer reads the statement about Sakina's death, as a medium long shot displays the characters: the inhabitants of the house are gathered on one side, standing by the door; Madame Osmane's husband stands on the other side, on the road, with the military officials – which implies that he is on 'their side'. This is confirmed when he signs the death certificate of his daughter, which validates the official version of Sakina's death: that the terrorists murdered her. She dismisses this version and accuses her husband of cowardice, suggesting that the military have the power to re-construct the facts to which her husband is subservient. The abovementioned scene contains the only medium close-up in which Moknèche privileges male presence. In subsequent shots, men are disregarded, relegated to a second plane, and are gradually removed from the frame, pushed to its margins. Madame Osmane decides she wants to open the coffin, but the state representatives refuse to let her; she threatens them with her gun, shouting in French: 'vous êtes des bourricots' and then fires her gun into the air, pushing the officers back. Her face is framed in a close-up, with an expression full of determination, without fear. The framing includes only Madame Osmane and Meriem, which accentuates the marginalization of men in the narrative.

In a close-up, after Madame Osmane opens the coffin and cries, her face finally seems softened; her features relax, bathed with daylight. Meriem starts ululating, a shout of celebration that women use for marriages, births or happy events. During the Algerian war, women would ululate when men were captured or killed; those men, *mujahidin*, became *chahid,* or martyrs, when they died, and so the shout was celebratory and defiant. Meriem announces, 'We are burying a bride'. With this statement Meriem acknowledges that Sakina is not leaving the house as a single woman but as a 'respected' woman; implying that only marriage guarantees respectability for women. However, the way Sakina's coffin is covered by the Algerian flag indicates that Sakina has become a *chahida.*

In this final scene Madame Osmane's use of language is certainly important in imposing her authority, albeit accompanied by her act of firing the gun. Moknèche gives her total control of the space outside the house, and she rallies her tenants to her side. She resurrects her *mujahida* past in an unexpected way: both the gun and the French language are left over from the colonial period, which is also the anti-colonial period; and she uses both to liberate herself from the power of the Algerian authorities and from the diktat of her husband. And of course, Moknèche may be said to use French in the same way: the film has almost no trace of Standard Arabic or *darija*, and the film uses French as a common language that reconnects the present with the colonial past.

The title of *Le Harem de Madame Osmane* chosen by Moknèche is ironic. It distorts the common definition of the word harem as a 'space occupied by women and ruled by a man'.[632] As illustrated in the analysis of the previous scene,

[632] Hakim Abderrezak, 'The Modern Harem in Moknèche's *Le Harem de Mme Osmane* and *Viva Laldjérie*', *Journal of North African Studies*, 12.3 (2007), 347-368 (p. 347.)

Moknèche deliberately chooses to exclude men from the women's space. He keeps men at the periphery of the narrative, which has the effect of making their absence even more acute. Moknèche creates what Hakim Abderrezak names a 'modern harem', a 'space not only of women but for women'.[633] Such a space allows women to speak freely and to re-conquer the public space from which men and the state have excluded them.

Viva Laldjérie: La Maman, la Fille et la Putain

In my first chapter, I discussed *Viva Laldjérie* in relation to language and its role in the construction of national identity. Now, I will address how the film's use of French relates to its themes of gender, sexuality and power. French, I argue, allows the characters to articulate sexual identities that are deemed taboo in Algeria, not least male homosexuality and unashamed female sexuality. The characters of *Viva Laldjérie* disrupt and challenge social norms and the film's female protagonists are freed from the authority of men and fathers, and use French to assert their freedom. The independence of the female protagonists is reflected in their lifestyle choices: Goucem does not marry and is the breadwinner; her friend Fifi is a prostitute who chooses her clients; and her mother Papicha chooses to work in a cabaret, to sing and dance.

Goucem and Papicha have moved from the outskirts to the centre of Algiers. Their economic situation reflects what Cynthia Cockburn describes as the changing role of women after traumatic events.[634] The situation for Algerian women had altered after a decade of terror: they had been attacked by terrorists and some were

[633] Ibid., p. 348.
[634] Cynthia Cockburn, *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict* (London: Zed, 1998), p. 52.

forced to wear the veil; they had experienced limits to their freedom of movement, with a curfew imposed in and around Algiers. Nonetheless, women played an important role in providing income – even if informally – for the house.

Goucem appears to have no other ambition than to fulfil her sexual desires and to entertain herself in nightclubs. In one of the first scenes of the film, Dr Sassi, Goucem's lover, and Goucem are engaged in sexual intercourse, and a medium-shot highlights and insists on her nudity for a few seconds. After she leaves Dr Sassi's work place, Goucem goes to a night club in the suburbs of Algiers. There, wearing a short dress, she seduces a young man, and the two of them have sex in a disused toilet block. The scene is filmed from above, with two male strangers gazing at her. Goucem defiantly stares back at them, as if she were confronting the viewer and affirming her sexual freedom. Ulloa observes that the film was often understood to be a documentary rather than a fiction and reports how Algerian viewers were shocked by Goucem's nudity and sex scenes.[635]

Although Azabal, who plays Goucem, is not Algerian, her character was interpreted by some critics and sections of the Algerian public (see Chapter 2) to represent all Algerian women, and by extension Algeria itself. This asks a lot of one character: French female characters are rarely forced to take on such responsibilities.[636] At the same time, there is no evidence that the Algerian public criticised Dr Sassi's adulterous behaviour, even though adultery in Algeria is punishable by law as contrary to Islamic precepts.[637]

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[635] Ulloa, ''Le Corps féminin maghrébin au cinéma à travers la réception de *Satin Rouge*, *Viva Laldjérie* et *Rachida* en Amérique du Nord'.
[636] Ibid.
[637] Adultery is punishable up to two years of imprisonment but only when the "offended spouse" complains.

The Algerian attitude towards adultery relates to the association between women's dishonour and national honour. Joanne Nigel argues that masculinity and nationalism are interlinked, and permeate patriarchal societies.[638] Nationalists, in Nigel's view, see themselves as defending both the family and the nation, and believe that 'women's shame is the family's shame, the nation's shame, the man's shame'.[639] The reception of *Viva Laldjérie* in Algeria clearly demonstrates the interconnectedness of nationalism, masculinity and the control of women's sexuality. Pinar Ilkkaracan argues that the nationalist 'construction of an "Islamic" sexual identity of women [is] at the top of [the nationalist] agenda and this control of women's sexuality is a means of safeguarding patriarchy'.[640]

When Goucem is in the nightclub, Sofiane, a young man who often visits Goucem's shop, is seen sitting outside. The club is in the poor suburbs of Algiers and reflects the emergence of a nouveau riche class in Algeria. It is surrounded by mud in the middle of unfinished buildings and by luxurious cars. Shot from above, Sofiane is overlooked by two other young men, more smartly dressed than him, who tease him in French, asking him if he goes to the 'parc zabologique,' alluding to places of illicit sexual encounter, particularly for gay men. Zabologique is the association of a word in Arabic, *zab*, for penis with the word *zoologiqu*e, the zoo, a place in Algiers where couples meet illicitly. Sofiane's French is inferior to theirs and he does not reply. This is the only scene when a joke is made in *darija*, which the men do in a knowing and ironic way that demonstrates their Francophone separation from lower-class language and humour. The two young men offer to get

[638] Joane Nagel, 'Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21.2 (1998), 246-269 (p. 253).
[639] Ibid., p. 254.
[640] Pinar Ilkkaracan, 'Women, Sexuality and Social Change in the Middle East and the Maghreb', *Social Research*, 69.3 (2002), 753-779 (p. 760).

Sofiane into the club, as he is poorly dressed which indicates his lower social class to them. A class dynamic is established through the pair's dominance of the frame, while Sofiane, remains at the edge of the frame.

Sofiane has been seen earlier in the film, as he lives in Goucem's neighborhood. She had already encountered and ignored him. Sofiane seems to be a *hittiste*: a term derived from the Arabic word *hit*, which means wall; the 'iste' is a French suffix which makes *hittiste* a hybrid noun or adjective. *Hittiste* therefore designates young men, usually unemployed, who linger in public, against a wall, all day as there is nothing for them to do. Sofiane's ambition is to obtain his passport and a visa to go abroad and leave Algeria. Austin remarks that the street is the space occupied by the young population born after independence – traditionally a masculine space, but not always a powerful one.[641]

Sofiane often goes to visit the shop where Goucem works, asking if his passport photographs are ready. On his visit after their encounter at the nightclub, Sofiane asks if his photos are ready. Goucem replies, 'Elles seront prêtes quand tu seras fixé sur le sexe que tu préfères'. French is, in this scene, the empowering language that allows Goucem to openly mock Sofiane's sexuality. Sofiane embodies the sexual ambivalence and the hopeless situation of Algerian young men: desperate to openly live their sexuality, already enduring many other frustrations, they have turned to same-sex relations because relations with women are more difficult to achieve. In Algeria, however, few men are openly homosexual: homosexuality and

[641] Austin, 'Spaces of the Dispossessed in Algerian Cinema', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 19.2 (2011), 195-208 (p. 204).

adultery are both considered sins in Islam, which accords hegemonic status to heterosexuality within marriage.[642]

Viva Laldjérie illustrates that language allows Goucem to live her sexuality, and allows for same-sex relations, however social norms constrain sexuality. She is pressured by her mother to get married, to whom she replies, 'qui voudra d'une fille de 27 ans, pas vierge qui a eu trois avortements'. Goucem is aware of the social stigma surrounding sexually liberated women. Same-sex relations are only discussed in French by upper classes, while the issue would be expressed in *darija* by the lower classes, and Sofiane is left powerless to act upon it. Hence while French cannot entirely overcome taboos, it brings them into focus.

***Délice Paloma*: Dreams Are Not for Every Woman**

Délice Paloma is Nadir Moknèche's third film and the final one of his Algerian trilogy. Once again, Moknèche uses the actresses Biyouna and Nadia Kaci, as well as Algiers as the film's location and French as main language. Biyouna plays Madame Aldjéria, who is released from prison at the start of the film, which then documents the events that led to her arrest. The film – not least through the suggestive name of its protagonist – critiques Algerian social and gender relations and illustrates how women are prevented from accessing power. French presents itself, in the film, as offering opportunities for social advancement. For example, to Madame Aldjéria, French becomes a tool for negotiating strategies to gain power. However, her pursuit of social prestige and wealth is hampered by enduring patriarchal values and state power. While some of the female characters in the film

[642] Andrew Kam-Tuck Yip, 'Islam and Sexuality: Orthodoxy and Contestations', *Contemporary Islam*, 3.1 (2009), 1-5 (p. 2).

freely experience their sexuality, they do so to service and seduce men. French only perpetuates gender roles and assigns fixed roles to women.

Moknèche locates *Délice Paloma* in Algiers, in 2006, and – by way of flashbacks and Madame Aldjéria's voice-over which draws the viewer into her unique perspective – he uses tropes strongly associated with film noir to reconstruct the story. Andrew Spicer argues that film noir of the 1950s held a 'dark mirror to post-war America and reflected its moral anarchy or social malaise'.[643] Though *Délice Paloma* is not straightforwardly a film noir, it reflects on the malfunction of Algerian society and the malaise of its population. The film is sun-drenched, but its story is dark: it addresses the corruption that pervades every level of society and scrutinizes how women survive in Algeria's newly liberalized economy.

Figure 35. *Délice Paloma*'s poster

[643] Andrew Spicer, *Film Noir* (Harlow, England; New York: Longman/Pearson Education, 2002), p. 19.

The plot revolves around Madame Aldjéria, who has an office in central Algiers and is surrounded by a close clan, composed mainly of women: her deaf-mute sister Mina (Fadila Ouabdesslam); her accomplice Scheherazade (Nadia Kaci); her son Riyadh (the Swedish actor Daniel Lundh); the shady lawyer Maître Jaafar (actor and director Lyes Salem); and a newcomer, Paloma (French-Italian actress Aylin Parandi). Madame Aldjéria helps people to resolve their issues: she helps women to get divorced by getting one of her 'girls' to seduce men and trap them into adultery so they can be forced to divorce. She also helps business-owners to get rid of their competition as she corrupts health services who inspect a café and close it for breaking hygiene rules. Each character has aspirations, Riyadh wants to leave for Italy to find his Italian father whom he does not known, Scheherazade wants to retire from work and get married, yet Madame Aldjéria's dream overshadows them all: she wants to begin a new life as owner of the 'Thermal Baths of Caracalla', which she has desired since a young age. Madame Aldjéria wants to buy and restore the baths, though she will fail. Her shady business is revealed and she is sentenced to three years in prison.

Délice Paloma obtained the *avance sur recettes* from the CNC and support for post-production from the French German television Arte, and gathered 6 million euros, a medium budget for a French film but a significant amount for an Algerian feature.[644] *Délice Paloma* was released in France to one hundred cinemas and attracted over 100,000 viewers, half as many as *Viva Laldjérie.*[645] The film's application for a visa for distribution in Algeria was never answered – a subtle form of censorship – although it had received Algerian funding as part of the 2007 cultural

[644] '*Délice Paloma*: production', AlloCiné website <http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm_gen_cfilm=110698.html> [accessed 20 October 2017].
[645] Ibid.

event 'Alger capitale de la culture Arabe'.[646] Unlike *Viva Laldjérie*, the use of French in the film did not raise any heated debate in the Algerian press. While *Viva Laldjérie* was censored for its nudity, that *Délice Paloma* was banned outright suggests that the Algerian authorities are more unsettled by investigations into their corruption than by supposed moral transgression.

In the film's opening scene Madame Aldjéria is introduced framed in a long tracking shot while she walks through a prison, accompanied by a policewoman who firmly grips her upper arm. In the next scene, she is in another policewoman's office. As she returns Madame Aldjéria's possessions, the policewoman states in *darija*, 'I hope you enjoyed your time in prison', and continues in French re-counting Madame Aldjéria's possessions (a brush, jewellery and makeup). While Madame Aldjéria is dressed in sportswear, emblazoned with the Algerian flag, with her long hair split into two greying braids, the policewoman is in uniform, sat in front of the Algerian flag, symbolising her authority. The scene reveals Madame Aldjéria's situation: she is demeaned, powerless and made to remain silent. It is one of the few occurrences where *darija* is used in the film, thus associating the language with state power and authority.

The prison scene inverts a later scene when Madame Aldjéria is sat, dealing with her clients, occupying a position of power. Her financial successes are illustrated in her office, which is located on a terrace overlooking Algiers and a close-up of her jewellery and expensive clothes, as well as the money she counts. Madame Aldjéria's office is prestigious and its details have been chosen carefully: a large desk, filing cabinets and an imposing leather chair. Algiers is often seen in

[646] Hachemi Zertal, 'Le Distributeur de Cirta Films nous écrit', *El Watan*, 29 November 2010, <https://www.elwatan.com/archives/culture-archives/le-distributeur-de-cirta-films-nous-ecrit-29-11-2010> [accessed 12 October 2017].

Délice Paloma, either from above and afar, or from closer quarters, with tight framing of its streets and buildings, under a bright light. The images render Algiers as a busy city, marking that Algeria has entered a new era after years of terrorism.

Figure 36. Madame Aldjéria at her desk.

One of Madame Aldjéria's clients, Madame Bellil, aims to get a divorce and full ownership of the cinema, *L'Alhambra*, that she and her husband own. She had approached Madame Aldjéria to help her trap her husband with one of Madame Aldjéria's girls, to which aim she uses Paloma, a newcomer to Madame Aldjéria's clan. Paloma is young, lives in the outskirts of Algiers, and has accepted to work for Madame Aldjéria to financially help her family. She is recruited as a belly dancer at Mr Bellil's cinema, to seduce him as well as dance in front of viewers before a film screening.

When Paloma dances before the screening, her body and movements are captured alternatively from high angle, indicating the gaze of Mr Bellil who is overlooking the scene, and from the audience's perspective in the theatre from eye level. The alternation of these long shots and the gazes transmit Mr Belli's joy at seeing Paloma dancing and his awakening desire. Paloma further seduces Mr Bellil as she discusses with him, in French, her passion for belly dancing and Egyptian belly dancers of the 1950s. Eventually, Paloma persuades Mr Bellil to meet her into

a hotel room, where a photographer and Maître Jaafar erupt into the room and accuse him of adultery. Paloma is different from Madame Aldjéria's other female recruits as she refuses to have sexual intercourse with the clients, and hence relies on her body and language to seduce men. Madame Aldjéria, eventually, is the only one who affirms her sexuality, and she does so in French when she directly addresses the camera. Framed in a close-up, she reveals that she met Riadh's father, an Italian man, on a beach, and have not seen him since. By directly addressing the viewer, she brandishes her sexual freedom and refuses to be judged, stating: 'Et alors, il y a un problème?'.

While Madame Aldjéria freely expresses her sexuality, her son Riyadh, is restricted by his mother. As mentioned earlier, he wants to go to Italy to find his father by any means. He grew up with Madame Aldjéria as a single mother. Riyadh nurtures many caged birds on the terrace of Madame Aldjéria's apartment. He does not set them free, mirroring his mother's behaviour: she prevents him from going to Italy, repeating to him in French, 'Je ne veux pas que tu me quittes, je ne veux pas'. It is not so much a father figure that Riyadh wants; rather, he wants a family lineage. That his mother wants to own the Thermal Baths of Caracalla, named after the Roman emperor, gives added significance to the possibility of an Italian patrilineage for Riyadh, especially as he wants to leave his mother who, by her name, is allegorically bound to Algeria.

While French is used most in the film, *darija* is the language associated with the *Miami*, a rai cabaret where Madame Aldjéria enjoys relaxing and where men and women gather to drink alcohol and dance. Via the cabaret, the film explores the relations between men and women, specifically in terms of how masculinity is constructed. Unlike *l'Alhambra* where only men gather, the *Miami* includes women,

but their attendance is harmful for their reputations. In the *Miami* club, Madame Aldjéria introduces Rafik as the *maître de cérémonie*. In fact, Rafik is a *barrah*, a public announcer who arranges dedications to songs requested by cabaret guests. The cabaret scene is filmed like a documentary and was inspired by Moknèche's visits to cabarets in Algeria.[647] The actor Cheb Rafik is an actual rai singer, and he uses *darija* to harangue guests without taboos in a playful way. Cheb Rafik is dressed in tight jeans and T-shirt, wearing makeup and jewellery which signal his queerness and associate him with Cheb Abdou, a real-life rai singer, known for his feminine outfits.

Figure 37. Madame Aldjéria and Paloma at the cabaret.

The guests compete, offering higher and higher payments, to have a song dedicated to themselves, their friends or their lovers, or against someone of their choosing. The *barrah* is integrated into the economic circuit of a party, to encourage the collection of money. The main bidding game in rai cabarets is called *kuntra*, which derives from the French word 'contre' as many songs will be dedicated *contre*

[647] '*Délice Paloma* Press Kit', Unifrance website <https://medias.unifrance.org/medias/89/96/24665/presse/delice-paloma-dossier-de-presse-francais.pdf> [accessed 20 June 2016].

some of the men who are present.[648] In one scene, Baya, a former employee of Madame Aldjéria, encourages one of her clients to bid against her. Baya is dressed in tight clothes, entertaining her clients and drinking. In return, Madame Aldjéria takes the money from a client, with his permission – women usually do not bid with their own money in the cabaret and use men's money to do so – and shouts, 'Contre contre Baya jusqu'au bout de la nuit'.

The anthropologist Marc Schade-Poulsen argues that social relations in cabarets depend more on money than on social position.[649] In fact, Schade-Poulsen highlights, the *barrah* makes money from emotion.[650] The high amounts of money involved – Madame Aldjéria bids with millions of dinars (10,000 euros) – indicate also the emergence of a 'nouveau riche' class, which exhibits its fortune in cabarets. The men in the cabaret demonstrate what Sadiqi describes as traditional masculinity, which 'serves to uphold patriarchal codes by requiring that males adopt dominant and aggressive behaviours and function in the public sphere'.[651] Cheb Rafik's songs, praising men and objectifying women, further reinforce masculinity and patriarchal values.

At the same time, because women do not spend their own money – they are only the objects of the bids, objects of desire – seduction is important to bring in money for these women. Mernissi argues that in Muslim countries where seclusion and veiling are prevalent, seduction becomes a 'structural component of human relations' and a means of communication.[652] Rafik's songs name the goods which

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[648] Ibid.
[649] Marc Schade-Poulsen, *Men and Popular Music in Algeria: The Social Significance of Raï* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), p. 49.
[650] Ibid., p. 51.
[651] Sadiqi, *Women, Gender and Language in Morocco*, p. 117.
[652] Fatima Mernissi, 'The Meaning of Spatial Boundaries', in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory, A Reader*, ed. by Reina Lewis and Sarah Mills (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), pp. 480-502 (p. 491).

women trap men into buying – refrigerators, cars, jewellery – and, as a result, the songs depict women as materialistic and scheming. Some songs composed do praise women, but only their beauty and body. On the night shown in the film, Rafik composes the song 'Je pense à toi Paloma' to honour Paloma's beauty and body.

Masculinity is constructed, Pedro Saez suggests, through socialization, whereby cultural norms and expectations are interiorized by boys through interaction with their peers, their families and society.[653] The men in the cabaret demonstrate traditional masculinity; though Riyadh conforms to the demands of patriarchal society in his desire for a father, he is not himself an image of traditional masculinity as described by Saez above.[654] When at the cabaret, Riyadh does not mix with the other men, and is framed sitting with is mother and the other women in the cabaret hence visually included in Madame Aldjéria's circle of women. Riyadh does not work, beyond acting as bodyguard and chauffeur to his mother and her 'girls', who are active publicly and professionally.

Andrea Khalil argues that, post-independence, 'Algerian masculinity is presented through mythic images, produced by ideological discourses'.[655] At 21, Riyadh is of a later generation to the one described by Khalil, one that witnessed the civil war and has neither myths nor illusions about its future in Algeria. Riyadh is also in love with Paloma and in an earlier scene, when they meet for the first time, a long shot introduces Paloma while she walks towards him as if she were dancing, while non-diegetic Egyptian music is heard. The camera focuses on Paloma's body and movements as she dances in a sensual manner. Riyadh is unable to express his

[653] Pedro Saez, 'Factors Influencing Masculinity Ideology Among Latino Men', *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 17.2 (2009), 116-128 (p. 116).
[654] Ibid., p.117.
[655] Khalil, 'The Myth of Masculinity in the Films of Merzak Allouache', *The Journal of North African Studies,* 12.3 (2007), 329-345 (p. 332).

love, and language does little to help him, which relates to his non-traditional masculinity.

Apart from Mina, Madame Aldjéria's deaf-mute sister, and Riyadh, all the members of the clan adopt new names to create new personas for themselves when they start working for Madame Aldjéria. In a flashback, she recounts how she met Scheherazade during the era of terrorism. Scheherazade was then dressed in rags and a headscarf. She appears to be homeless and possibly engaged in prostitution, and she screams at men who are trying to gain sexual favours from her, in *darija*. As they chat, Scheherazade reveals that her real name is Zouina, which means 'charming' in Arabic. Her nickname, Scheherazade – after the character from *1001 Arabian Nights* – was chosen by Mme Aldjéria to evoke fantasies in men. Scheherazade is one of the few protagonists in the film to use *darija*, which reconnects her to her past but also reflects her lower social class. Yet under Madame Aldjéria's influence, Scheherazade is transformed: she wears finer clothes and make-up and begins to use French.

At the beginning of the film – though before Madame Aldjéria begins the story of why she was imprisoned – she meets Scheherazade outside the prison after she has just been released. Scheherazade is veiled and married, to a bearded man, and has children. Her veil contrast with her wildness, exposed later in the film, and it seems to serve as a redemption for her wayward youth. The veil symbolises her repentance, whereas when women wore the veil in Moknèche's earlier films, they did so as a disguise to go out (like Goucem, in *Viva Laldjérie*, going to a night club). Madame Aldjéria does not believe that Scheherazade has changed, and expresses her doubts, to which she replies: 'Tout va bien, j'ai un bon mari, un bel appartement, de beaux enfants, *Al hamdullah*, tout va bien'. The fact that Scheherazade has turned to

the veil and has married after Madame Aldjéria's fall and arrest is symbolic of her return to patriarchal values. Scheherazade, once more Zouina, will give birth to twins with Bilal, her husband, thus creating the only family in the film, and suggesting a fatalistic return to the cycle of a religious and patriarchal authority.

Before she goes to prison, Madame Aldjéria's dream to revive and renovate the baths of Caracalla is about to be realized when she meets M. Benbaba, a former minister of Human Rights and National Solidarity and now President of the commission responsible for the redistribution of state-owned tourist attractions to private individuals. She pays him a bribe, which he uses to organize a *méchoui*, a roasted lamb banquet. The scene opens under a bright sun, with M. Benbaba and his friends gathered, alongside well-dressed upper-class women and Madame Aldjéria and her clan. All the guests mingle, chatting in French and laughing, and as the afternoon progresses and the invitees drink wine and eat lamb, M. Benbaba stands among his guests, singing Cheb Rafik's song 'Je pense à toi Paloma'. To explain why he knows a song from the lower-class environment of the cabaret, Benbaba tells Madame Aldjéria that he believes that he must always be close to the people – never cut off from the street. This clearly marks *darija* as the language of the lower classes, in contrast to the French used by the upper-class guests.

During the lunch everyone eats the meat, apart from Paloma. Panning shots and close-ups of the state officials greedily stuffing their mouths serves as an allegory for Algeria's political situation. Corruption has infiltrated the highest strata of state power, as represented by M. Benbaba. Later, he reveals that he knows about Madame Aldjéria's unlawful activities and he wants a cut of her profits because, he claims, he is taking a risk in selling a state property to a *mafieuse*. Madame Aldjéria is forced to confront the established power in Algeria, represented by M. Benbaba, to

whom – for all her own corruption – she remains subordinate due to her gender and class. At the banquet, M. Benbaba asks Madame Aldjéria to let Riyadh spend the weekend with his wife, who fancies him. Maître Jaafar tries to convince her to go along with the plan: his logic is that she has been so unscrupulous so far, she can sacrifice her son. Riyadh, however, cannot be found. He may have escaped with Paloma by boat. Soon, the police raid the banquet. Madame Aldjéria's illegal dealings are revealed and she is taken to prison. She is punished for aspiring to something above her station. Speaking the same language as M. Benbaba did not help her.

As a bittersweet comedy, *Délice Paloma* explores themes of domination, oppression and confinement, all in relation to gender. Even if the outcome is rather ominous, *Délice Paloma* presents female characters who are ready to do anything to compete on the same level as men. Madame Aldjéria's project is to return to the source, to the fountain of youth that will cleanse and rejuvenate her, and her failure represents the difficulties that Algeria faces in starting afresh. Like young people, women are excluded from power and political influence, and language is of no help – only those with money can be heard.

Les Terrasses: All Equally Desperate

Les Terrasses is Merzak Allouache's thirteenth feature film, from a prolific decade that involved a new film every two years. *Les Terrasses* is spread across five rooftops, in five emblematic districts of Algiers: Bab El Oued, the Casbah, Telemly, El Hamma (also known as Belcourt, a name inherited from French colonial presence), and Bologhine (also known as Notre-Dame d'Afrique). The film takes place over the course of a day and is punctuated by the five calls to prayer. The

stories on these rooftops are disconnected from one another, their juxtaposition offering a microcosm of Algerian society.

Allouache manipulates the rooftop spaces to include men and women in a domestic space usually reserved for women. Indeed, unlike his previous films, *Bab El Oued City* (1994) and *Omar Gatlato* (1977), in which the rooftops were spaces where women gathered to chat and do laundry, the rooftops in *Les Terrasses* become living spaces in El Hamma, spaces for music in Telemly, religious shrines and wedding venues in Bab El Oued, religious spaces in the Casbah, and places for torture in Bologhine. Allouache deliberately chooses the rooftops as spaces that are neither public nor private, but somewhere in-between that allows the scenes to be filmed like a *huis clos*, yet open to outside eyes, and not behind closed doors. Allouache does not offer much opportunity to locate his film historically, as if to suggest that the events he describes are ongoing in Algeria. The only temporal hint is the visit of French President François Hollande, which locates the film after 2012 and after the Arab spring.

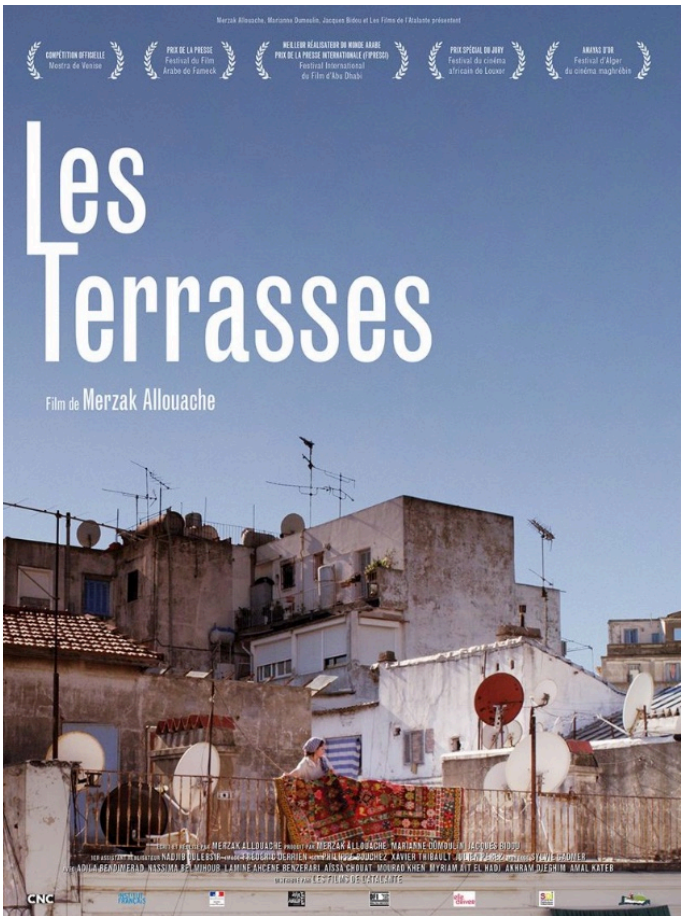

Figure 38. *Les Terrasses*'s poster

The film mainly uses Algiers's *darija*, with its accent, interspersed with French, Berber and Standard Arabic. By collapsing the boundaries of public and private space, and the spatial boundaries between men and women, as well as using everyday language, Allouache achieves a realistic effect that shows that there is no consignment of language to a particular space or gender. The use by men and women of essentially the same language – and, furthermore, *darija* – indicates a shifting power dynamic: women are seen to have the same power to speak as men and to appropriate the space offered to them. *Les Terrasses* also investigates gender inequalities that cannot be overcome by language due to the persistence of patriarchal values.

Les Terrasses was shot within eleven days, due to the scarcity of funding and the difficulty of filming for subsequent days on the rooftops. Furthermore, Allouache

asked the actors to speak in a naturalistic way and gave little direction regarding dialogue to achieve a spontaneous language. It was difficult for Allouache to obtain authorization from the buildings' inhabitants; therefore, scenes were filmed hurriedly, and the unrehearsed dialogue adds to the naturalistic effect – even though the Algerian journalist Fayçal Métaoui considered many of the film's lines to be clichéd.[656] However, I would argue that naturalistic language can be clichéd and use common expressions, and Métatoui's view only expresses his ambivalence towards the expectations of how the characters should speak in an Algerian film. Even if the characters use clichéd language, they still convey Allouache's authorial intention to bring to the forefront some of the cultural and political issues that the characters experience.

With a reduced team and a handheld camera, the film's use of shot-reverse-shot retains the beauty of the Bay of Algiers in the background, filmed in long shots, while the foreground increasingly tightens on the characters, their expressions and multiple close-ups. The beauty of the city, of the sea, seen from the rooftops, is contrasted with the protagonists' destinies. The city is seen from afar, so that the streets are difficult to identify, and street sounds are lost to the wind. Non-diegetic music is absent from the film, which adds to the feeling of realism and the remorseless plight of the protagonists. The terraces offer views of Algiers but also of buildings in decline, of dirt and cracked paint. Furthermore, the use of *darija* brings the Algerian viewer closer to the characters. These elements were considered by some Algerian journalists to present a negative image of Algeria, which for them

[656] Fayçal Métaoui, 'Entre nuages et muezzin. Avant-première du film Les Terrasses de Merzak Allouache à Alger', *El Watan*, 11 June 2014 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/elwatan/460620> [accessed 6 November 2017].

was part of Allouache's effort to please foreign audiences by showing only Algeria's problems.[657]

The film also enquires into subjects deemed taboo in Algerian society, such as same-sex love between women, female sexual dissatisfaction, and, with the character of a raped woman, the consequences of the Black Decade. One such issue relating to gender is the contradictory position of women in Algerian society, represented by the juxtaposition of the characters of Assia (Adila Bendimerad) and Neila (Meriem Medjkane). While Assia is the lead singer, dressed in jeans, unveiled and mixing with male singers, Neila dresses in a traditional dress, veiling her head with a turban. She is filmed in the daylight, in the distance, as she spreads a carpet, signalling the domestic life she leads, forming a contrast with Assia, who starts rehearsing with her band. Assia is part of an all-male *Gnawa* fusion group that performs Algeria's southern music mixed with modern sounds; she sings and plays the *guembri*, a traditional single gut-string lute.

Assia is filmed that morning hurriedly kissing her boyfriend in the corner of the terrace where they rehearse, shielded from the gaze of the other men of the band. She is also the strong-headed leader of the band, who expresses her refusal to play at a venue sponsored by a commercial event because she wants to be recognised as an artist. She is willing to disagree with the other, male, members of the group. She freely says, in French, 'Je suis une artiste'. The use of French signifies her middle-class urban status, and she mixes it with *darija* to openly criticise the men of the group who want to play for money. Her use of language displays her confidence and self-assertion.

[657] Idjer, 'Cinéma. Merzak Allouache à propos des critiques dont il est l'objet', *Info Soir*, 15 June 2014 <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/infosoir/167660> [accessed 6 November 2017].

Figure 39. Assia and the music band

Neila, on the other hand, is silent. She is only filmed from afar, in long shots when she stands on the opposite rooftop, at a distance from Assia. She gazes and listens to the band as they rehearse, which exasperates Assia who considers Neila's gaze as intrusive. Assia tells the others that Neila sends her love poetry in Arabic (stating in *darija* 'chiir bel arrabiya', 'poetry in Arabic') and text messages, belittling and mocking these acts. One of the men hints in French that Neila is 'lesbienne', to which Assia replies that Neila might not even be aware of the word. These comments indicate the differences in social status between the women. Neila's domesticity and even subservience to patriarchal values are further established when a male relative erupts on the rooftop and orders her to stop staring at the band and hits her, forcing her to go inside. This shakes Assia, who screams and orders the men of the band to help Neila. Yet while the men agree that it is unfair, they are unwilling to go and help, apparently not wanting to disturb the social order. Assia is conscious of the limitation of her role in this scene, since her only recourse is to scream. Language is unable to transcend the situation of these two women. The man on the terrace is oppressive and violent, and the male band mates turn out to be cowards.

Figure 40. Neila seen from Assia's rooftop

Neila and Assia never openly speak to one another. Later that same day, however, Assia is filmed whispering to Neila; the scene is shot from Assia's point of view, and Neila messages Assia. The text message, written in Latin letters, states in *darija* that she has something to show to Assia in the evening. Neila's use of the text message is her way of breaking the silence to which she is confined, and her use of *darija* indicates the familiarity she has now established with Assia (as well as how *darija* can also be a written language used to communicate intimate feelings). Later, Neila reappears on the rooftop, her hair is released, and she is dressed in a traditional white dress. A silent intimacy is established between Neila and Assia, with the camera focussing on Assia's face as she mimes and whispers, in *darija*, that she finds Neila beautiful and that she loves her. Neila's reaction is not filmed, only her feet approaching the edge of the rooftop before she jumps.

By committing suicide, and appearing with her hair loosened, Neila reclaims her body and her sexuality. While suicide represents, on one level, the loss of agency, Neila rebels in this way against the man who oppressed her and controlled her body in the previous scene. Neila's action also displays that she no longer accepts subservience and obedience but decides her own fate. Apart from her text

messages, Neila's actions are only seen through Assia's point of view. Secrecy was Neila's only means to reach Assia, prevented by her male guardian and by Algerian society at large from speaking openly. Evelyne Accad argues that in Arab-Islamic societies silence presides over three main areas: the female body, women's personal relationships, and sexual identity.[658] In the case of Neila, the three areas are connected: she is unable to dress as she wishes, to fully live her sexuality, and to have a more fulfilling relationship with Assia. Neila's suicide underscores her desperation; her silence marks her powerlessness and the impossibility of openly expressing her love.

The inability to fully live one's sexuality is also tackled on another rooftop in Bab El Oued, a popular area. Fatiha, wearing a black *niqab* – a full veil that reveals only the eyes – is introduced as she has come to seek the help of the *cheikh*, a religious old man. The *cheikh* rents a small room from a drunken man who manages the rooftop. Upon entering the dimly lit room, the *cheikh* asks Fatiha to remove her *niqab*, and observes how she changed the colour of her hair, even adding that he prefers a darker colour. Asking Fatiha what brings her to him, Fatiha reveals in *darija* that when her husband approaches her she does not feel anything. The *cheikh* replies, 'what do you mean?' Fatiha is too embarrassed to reply and only repeats 'I do not feel anything'. The *cheikh* says to Fatiha that there is an evil between her and her husband, the *djinn lahmar* (the red evil), and he needs to remove it from her. The *cheikh* then starts beating up the young woman to extract the evil from her.

The scene is filmed in a dark interior, from the perspective of the man on the terrace who looks through a hole in the door, which aligns the viewer with the

[658] Evelyne Accad, 'Sexuality and Sexual Politics: Conflicts and Contradictions for Contemporary Women in the Middle East', in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 237–250 (p. 241).

voyeuristic gaze of this man. The man's peeping is obstructed by the *cheikh* as he moves around, and the character's frustration is transmitted to the viewer thus establishing a direct connection. As she is beaten by the *cheikh*, Fatiha screams. The *cheikh* is presented as a religious man whose religious authority relies partly on his situation as a *hajj* (that is, he has made the pilgrimage to Mecca), and his traditional dress. An earlier scene shows him glancing at the images of naked women hanging in the room he rents, as if to confirm his dubious religious status. The belief that there is an evil that prevents Fatiha from sexual pleasure assumes that male sexuality is active and incorruptible: it suffers no repudiation, disapproval or public condemnation, though the woman's sexual dissatisfaction is seen as the sign of evil, and it is only through the beating of her body that it can be countered.

Though Fatiha accepts the *cheikh*'s command to remove her *niqab*, she has previously shouted at the drunken man who manages the terrace when he looks at her. Fatiha is perfectly capable of speaking and defending herself, yet she is subservient to the *cheikh*'s authority, and she believes him. The *cheikh* does not need to use Standard Arabic or citations of the Quran: his religious status, his masculinity and the woman's belief in his powers are what lead the woman to accept her beating. While Fatiha is being beaten up, again Allouache contrasts her situation with that of other women present on the same rooftop who are dressed in interior clothes, signalling how the rooftop belongs to the domestic sphere and not the outside world, a space where they can smoke freely and joke. The women assert their right to the space and insult in *darija* the drunken man in charge of the rooftop.

The figure of the *cheikh* is also differentiated from the religious cleric who is filmed on the Casbah rooftop. The religious cleric leads the prayer then sits and gives a class in Standard Arabic. He speaks about the life of a prodigy of Islam, a

young Tanzanian boy, who learnt the Quran and was called a *cheikh*. While the preacher is filmed, the other men remain silent. The women are kept aside looking at him; they are veiled and filmed behind a fenced window. No space is offered to them either visually or physically. They are kept at distance. The preacher praises Muammar El Gaddafi, describing him as a martyr – *chahid*. The scene reminds the viewer of the ongoing influence of political Islam in Algeria, and of the power of religious men who master Standard Arabic and the space offered to them. It also displays how historical facts can be twisted, such that Gaddafi becomes a hero. The scene is also reminiscent of the ideological capital still made by the Algerian government from the war of independence with the use of the *chahid* status. A ministry of *chouhada* (plural of *chahid*) has been created since independence and the status of the Algerian *chahid* is upheld in sacredness in Algerian political discourse.

Although Allouache's film is not directly about female sexuality, he does strive to make visible the consequences and the trauma inflicted on raped women. He chooses the character of Aïcha (actress Amel Kateb), a middle-aged woman who lives with her aunt and her son, Krimo, on a rooftop in Belcourt. Aïcha roams the rooftop, dressed in rags, her hair unleashed, and she smokes or sits staring at the sea. She has a deranged expression, she dresses eccentrically, and hardly speaks; we learn, as her aunt speaks about her, that her silence is linked to the trauma she has endured. As in *Rachida* (discussed in Chapter two), the traumatized woman is pushed to the margins; her links to others are severed since it is implied that her father does not accept her. Furthermore, her adolescent son, Krimo, born from the rape of his mother, is a drug addict.

The rape of Algerian women during the Black Decade has largely been kept out of public discourse. By offering a visual representation of what has befallen

Aïcha, a space is offered to her, to be viewed and heard. Yet she is not accepted by her family, which reflects the ambivalent response to the trauma she lives. While she has welcomed her niece to live with her, Aïcha's aunt continuously tells her that she is not a proper mother and that Krimo, Aïcha's illegitimate son, will never become a man. Aïcha's aunt has lived on the rooftop for decades since she lost her home. She has built up a small room where she, her niece and Krimo live. Aïcha's rage and despair are vented when her son is attacked by the landlord who comes onto the rooftop to evict the family. The landlord speaks very aggressively to Aïcha's aunt to remind her of the hierarchy and their social status. Krimo then gets out of the room, a small shack built on the roof, and attacks the landlord, who in turn starts strangling him. Aïcha grabs a pressure cooker and beats him to death. She remains silent, but her repossession of the space and the murder she commits proves that the passive woman has some powers of resistance and does not accept the fate inflicted upon her.

Throughout the film, diegetic music in the form of Assia's singing or *chaabi* music, at a wedding, can be heard. Allouache wrote Assia's song: its lyrics, about a lack of love between people, reflect the hatred between Algerians due to jealousy, betrayal or treachery. The song conveys the final message of the film – that Algeria's social and political situation is dire and, furthermore, its gender issues will not be resolved any time soon. *Les Terrasses* portrays a desperate situation for men and women alike. The film expresses this bleak verdict through all the languages available to it, as well as through silence. Although not all the women in the film are subordinated and subservient, neither men nor women have found a satisfactory means of conveying their desire for freedom, voicing their anger or asserting themselves.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to investigate the interplay between language, gender, sexuality, and power in a selection of films in relation to the Algerian and Moroccan social contexts. Another concern was to examine the extent to which the films under analysis confirm or challenge sociolinguistic theories around gender, language and power – specifically, whether a particular language (French, *darija* or Standard Arabic) can allow the characters to transcend gender stereotypes and be empowered. Through the films analysed, it is noticeable that in contrast to Sadiqi's affirmation that *darija* is the maternal language confined to the private sphere, some of the films analysed bring *darija* to the forefront and valorise it as a language used equally by men and women domestically and in the public sphere.

Darija is indeed no longer a marginalised language within Moroccan or Algerian society. Instead, it is part of daily and cultural life. *Darija* is the empowering language for women in *Much Loved* and *Sur la planche* as it gives agency to marginalised women and reconfigures traditional power dynamics between dominating men and dominated women. By rejecting polite language, and reclaiming vulgar *darija* as their own, the protagonists of *Much Loved* and *Sur la planche* challenge gender roles and moral and social conventions. Crude language and slang undermine essentialist representations of women as submissive, obedient and polite, and challenge hegemonic masculinities. Through *darija*, Badia and Noha in *Sur la planche* and *Much Loved* establish a social space that both parallels and opposes the organisation of gender in the space that excludes them.

I have summarised earlier in this chapter Lakoff's, Coates's and Cameron's findings on gender, language, and power. Lakoff's research was concerned with American middle-class suburban middle-class women of a particular era, and she observed that women spoke in a more polished manner than men and hence were powerless. It has become clear that Lakoff's findings cannot be transposed to modern Morocco; they are contradicted by Badia's and Noha's use of *darija*. *Darija* allows women to use crude language and slang and in *Sur la planche* and *Much Loved*, it appears that they are neither more polite than the men nor less powerful. Coates investigated patterns of speech amongst English speaking men and women and concluded that there is no clear-cut distinction between masculine and feminine speech. Badia and Noha also speak at times like 'men', swearing and using taboo words, which suggests that Coates's findings also apply in this different linguistic and cultural context. Furthermore, slang and crude language allow Noha and Badia to construct alternative femininities that are counterhegemonic to the norms of femininity imposed by Moroccan society. While Cameron's original claim was concerned with American women, *Much Loved* and *Sur la planche* confirm that Cameron's view can be transposed to another culture and language, which is that by making discursive assertions Badia and Noha claim social power.

Yet the films that received the most praise were *Agadir Bombay* and *Les Jardins de Samira*. The public's strong reaction to *Much Loved* alongside its acceptance of *Les Jardins de Samira* and *Agadir Bombay* confirm Lakoff's view that women cannot use crude language without being stigmatised and are thus prohibited from using the same words as men. *Les Jardins de Samira* and *Agadir Bombay* confirm the prevalence of gender and linguistic social norms and expectations by the public, particularly in relation to taboo words and sexuality. *Les Terrasses* offered a

multi-layered view of how women and men spoke to express their social and sexual frustrations in a period marked by the 'Arab spring', during which, however, little political change has occurred in Algeria. Yet these expressions of frustration and discontent do not seem to have much effect: the use of *darija* in *Les Terrasses* does not empower any of the characters, either men or women; instead it only highlights the despair of Algerians who share the same language.

Although Coates's and Cameron's observations were limited to English-speaking groups, *Much Loved* and *Sur la planche* prove that when transposed to another cultural, social and linguistic context, these findings may still be valid. Indeed, one might expect language use to be systematically different in Morocco where gender roles are often perceived to be relatively rigid and clearly demarcated. Hence, while some films advance *darija* as a powerful language, the public's reaction still maintains social norms in relation to women's and men's speech. Furthermore, the Algerian and Moroccan films highlight how Standard Arabic is still the most empowering language, for men, as in *Les Terrasses* and *Les Jardins de Samira*. When Standard Arabic is used it is linked to religious discourse, rather than the unifying language of the nation. Standard Arabic provides its speakers with prestige and respect, thus confirming Sadiqi's findings.

While *darija* is the main language of these films, it is noticeable that French is hardly employed in the Moroccan films studied. When French is used, it is mainly by women to give them social prestige. For example, the textile worker in *Sur la planche* who uses French words asserts her higher social position. Samira in *Les Jardins de Samira* uses French to assert her urban position and differentiate herself from her rural husband. Noha in *Much Loved* modulates her language to her gender performance and uses French to seduce her French client and conform to the

submissive image of a powerless woman. French, in these films, thus conforms to Sadiqi's view that French provides women with access – or at least, temporary access – to a better social class while remaining unthreatening to men.

Noticeably, the situation radically changes when French is used in Moknèche's trilogy. The director refuses to confine French to a marginal language used in Algeria by the urban educated class, and his narratives play out in a context where French is used by all the characters. Contrary to Sadiqi's affirmation about the use of French and the prestige it confers, in Moknèche's films French loses its association with prestige for women, and men are threatened by women who speak French. Moknèche also shows that while French allows characters to openly display different sexual identities, the characters are nonetheless constrained by social and cultural norms.

The questions I have asked throughout the chapter are whether, and to what extent, language emerges plausibly as a valuable tool to resist patriarchal dominance, as well as which language would achieve this aim. What is noticeable, above all, is that these films pose the question of gender, sexuality and language, at times in a provocative and destabilising manner for the Algerian and Moroccan public. Even if the answers some of the films provide are relatively bleak, the films studied have shown that *darija* and French are means by which the structures of patriarchy could be put on display. These languages, and noticeably not Standard Arabic, allow for multiple possibilities of derailing gender and sexual norms and the cultural discourses that surround them.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the politics of language in a selection of Algerian and Moroccan films produced between 1999 and 2015. The introduction historicised the politics of Standard Arabic, *darija* and French in Algeria and Morocco since independence, before summarising recent scholarship on language in films. The introductory chapter further contextualised the politics of Arabisation and I located Algerian and Moroccan cinemas in the broader academic debate on national cinema and pointed to the role of language in establishing the relation between film and national identity. Taking a thematic approach, I then divided the remaining of the thesis into three chapters. Chapter Two dealt with language and national identity and explored what each language came to represent over the years. I argued that when films use more than one language, this can be understood as a challenge to any conception of Algerian or Moroccan identity that binds it to a singular language or religion (typically, Standard Arabic and Islam).

In Chapter Three, I added religion and politics to these complex interrelations. In Algerian films, I exposed how both French and *darija* were used to express the trauma experienced by men and women during the Black Decade. While *darija* was spoken by all the protagonists in the films of the Black Decade, French and Standard Arabic bore the ideological tensions that were at stake during that traumatic period, and I established that neither French nor Standard Arabic were exclusively used by any competing faction – Islamists or their opponents. In the Algerian and Moroccan films analysed, I demonstrated that slang *darija* was the language used by young people when articulating their despair. *Darija* was the language of political contest that opened a space of freedom for young men and

women. Finally, I discussed how Standard Arabic is ideologically bound to Islam and to the religious ideology that pervades everyday life in Algeria and in Morocco.

Chapter Four further investigated gender, power, and sexuality, drawing on theoretical research in sociolinguistics on language, gender and power. I argued that the films' reception confirmed the linguistic and gendered expectations of men and women. In some of the films, women used chaste language, and did not display any sexual desire, while men could use crude and vulgar language while boasting about their sexuality. The films also demonstrated the shortcomings of attempting to assign specific functions to individual languages: French and *darija* both allowed linguistic and sexual norms to be defied, to empower men as well as won, while both languages were also used, elsewhere, to assert patriarchal values.

In this thesis, we have seen too that diegetic and non-diegetic music is also inspired by the multi-linguistic scenes of Algeria and Morocco. The films use different genres: rai, Andalus, songs from the Algerian south, Berber music, rock, Middle Eastern music and electronic and jazz compositions. In *Où Vas-tu Moshé?*, Jewish and Muslim conviviality in Morocco is re-enacted through music: musical exchange and cross-faith friendship are placed back into Moroccan history. Alla's *oud* or the Berber song in *Barakat!* indicate the persistence of local musical traditions that are core components of cultural identity. The plurality of musical genres, diegetic and non-diegetic, in these films is evidence of hybridity and transnationalism, which cannot be accurately conveyed through just one musical form. In this way, the musical diversity mirrors Algeria and Morocco's multilingualism, and part of its own diversity is linguistic.

The corpus of films also illustrates that a range of Algerian and Moroccan directors – born before and after independence, men, women – display stylistic and

thematic originality in addressing diverse social, political, and religious issues as well as tackling taboo subjects. These directors also celebrate their countries' multilingualism, rejecting a homogenous language and embracing a multiplicity of identities. Téguia, Kilani, Moknèche, Marrakchi and Ayouch venture further than others in expressing a harsh critique of society, of patriarchal traditions, by using slang, crude language, *darija* and French, bringing attention to the marginalised, opening a debate on the public scene to foster a more inclusive society. Others, such as Chraibi, Bakir, Lahlou, Bachir Chouikh and Salmy, include in their films a far more consensual language (either French or *darija*) that maintains gender and class boundaries. Hence, both male and female, Algerian and Moroccan directors use French, crude *darija*, slang and Standard Arabic as well as polite, chaste language.

Although scholars who analyse Algerian and Moroccan films tend to divide them between female and male directors, it is in fact difficult to assert that there is a significant correlation between a choice of language or subject and a director's gender, as this thesis has conclusively shown that the use of *darija* and French cuts across genders. Similarly, scholars have 'tended to divide and pit Arabophone against Francophone', either in relation to film or literature, implying that language leads filmmakers and writers to express different views – French as the language of modernity and Arabic as the language maintaining patriarchal traditions.[659] This thesis has however established that dividing Algerian and Moroccan filmmakers into Arabophone or Francophone is fruitless as their use of different languages did not coincide with different thematic choices. Finally, one noticeable distinction between Algerian and Moroccan filmmakers, either female or male, is that Algerian filmmakers included French more readily in their films. While French is mainly the

[659] Orlando, *Screening Morocco: Contemporary Film in a Changing Society*, p. 37.

upper classes' language, associated with higher education in Moroccan films, it has been appropriated by other classes as well as mixed with *darija* in Algerian films. While the latter shows the desire of Algerian filmmakers to integrate French and assert more forcefully Algeria's linguistic pluralism, it also reflects a difference in linguistic practice between the two countries in this era.

In relation to scholarly studies of literature in the Maghreb, the scholar Madeleine Dobie observes that texts in French are widely studied by critics who ignore texts produced in Arabic. Hence, those readers cannot compare how literary works from the same region, but in different languages, respond differently to social and political events.[660] In film criticism, by contrast, as I suggested in the introduction, critics are often uninhibited about discussing films in languages they do not speak or understand. But in both spheres, the upshot is that critics repeatedly fail to give due weight to a certain multilingual reality – that is, to multilingualism as an important part of that reality – and to the question of how widely different worldviews become associated with different languages and varied linguistic practices. In this thesis, I have argued that the study of language in films matters, particularly in films from multi-lingual countries, since it enables us to account for all the forms of expression and experiences these languages allow. By studying films' use of *darija*, in conjunction with films in French and Standard Arabic, I have exposed the ideologies of language as well as linguistic stereotyping; *darija* is no longer an illegitimate language as since 1999 it has been widely used in films and is gaining in power; French is not only an elitist language used by the upper-classes but can be appropriated by Algerians and Moroccans from varied backgrounds (although

[660] Madeleine Dobie, 'Francophone Studies and the Linguistic Diversity of the Maghreb', Comparative *Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 23.1 (2003), 32- 40 (p. 33).

not necessarily all backgrounds); and Standard Arabic remains a powerful vehicle of religious and state ideology – mainly spoken by men – and, in some cases, a language associated with punishment, deception and corruption. The films investigated, therefore, resist any ideology that homogenises Algerian or Moroccan identity – particularly where that might involve an official language, in particular, Standard Arabic, superseding other languages; and at the same time, they complicate and challenge any clear – and potentially divisive – conception of the link between a particular language and a particular set of ideologies and identities. As well as emphasising the linguistic diversity of the Maghreb, then, and of the cinemas of Algeria and Morocco, my aim was to show that Francophone films and Arabophone films are often engaged with similar issues, in all their complexity. Similarly, Algerian and Moroccan cinemas are in dialogue with one other, both inscribed within transnational North African and global cinema.

If the films in this corpus have revealed the central role of language in films, it is worth reflecting upon how the scope of this project could be widened for future research. I argued in the introduction that one of the principal limitations was the exclusion of films in Berber languages due to my own inability to speak the language and thus understand them. Undoubtedly, though, further study of Berber-speaking films would shed light on the integration of Berber communities in the two countries, illuminating issues of national identity, politics and gender as well as linguistic practice itself. I hope, nonetheless, that this thesis has shown that it is time for critics and commentators inside and outside the Maghreb to acknowledge fully, and indeed to celebrate, Algeria's and Morocco's multilingualism, and to analyse films in French alongside films in Standard Arabic, Berber languages and *darija*, in order to bring them into dialogue with one another, and to understand the full

significance of diverse linguistic practices in their historical, political and cultural contexts. I hope also that this thesis has equally demonstrated the relevance of inserting language into the study of film, more widely, and as such could also offer new avenues for examining a diverse range of national, trans-national and regional cinemas, starting with Tunisia for further comparison, and broadly 'Maghrebi' films made in France – examining how Arabic languages, *darija*, and accents are used in conjunction with French. On a wider scale still, I hope to have shown that multilingualism may at times be obscured by the ideology of a 'national language' (or indeed, as touched upon in chapter One, by the idea of a 'national cinema'). Further study of diverse cinemas, including those of the Maghreb, may cast yet new light on this widespread and complex phenomenon.

Filmography

À la recherche du mari de ma femme (Dir. Mohammed Abderhamane Tazi, 1993)

Adieu Mères (Dir. Mohammad Ismael, 2007)

Agadir Bombay (Dir. Myriam Bakir, 2011)

Algérie, la vie quand même (Dir. Djamila Sahraoui, 1998)

Algérie, la vie toujours (Dir. Djamila Sahraoui, 2001)

Alyam Alyam (Dir. Ahmed El Maanouni, 1978)

Amours voilées (Dir. Aziz Salmy, 2008)

Bab El Oued City (Dir. Merzak Allouache, 1994)

Barakat! (Dir. Djamila Sahraoui, 2006)

Battle of Algiers (Dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966)

Blue Gardenia (*The*) (Dir. Fritz Lang, 1953)

Boyz N the Hood (Dir. John Singleton, 1991)

C'est eux les chiens (Dir. Hisham Lasris, 2013)

Casablanca (Dir. Michael Curtiz, 1942)

Casanegrea (Dir. Noureddine Lakhmari, 2008)

Charbonnier (*Le*) (Dir. Mohammed Bouamari, 1972)

Chevaux de Dieu (*Les*) (Dir. Nabil Ayouch, 2012)

Chouchou (Dir. Merzak Allouache, 2002)

Délice Paloma (Dir. Nadir Moknèche, 2007)

Démon au féminin (*Le*) (Dir. Hafsa Zinaï Koudil, 1992)

Djazairouna (Dir. Pierre Chaulet, Djamel Chanderli and Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina,1959)

Force of Evil (Dir. Abraham Polonsky, 1948)

Foreign Correspondent (Dir. Alfred Hitchcok, 1940)

Goodbye Morocco (Dir. Nadir Moknèche, 2013)

Haine (*La)* (Dir. Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995)

Harem de Madame Osmane (*Le*) (Dir. Nadir Moknèche, 2000)

Islamour (Dir. Saad Chraibi, 2008)

Itto (Dir. Jean Benoit-Levy, Marie Epstein, 1934)

Jardins de Samira (*Les*) (Dir. Latif Lahlou, 2007)

Kramer vs Kramer (Dir. Robert Benton, 1979)

L.627 (Dir. Bertrand Tavernier, 1992)

Loin (Dir. André Techiné, 2001)

Machaho (Dir. Belkacem Hadjadj, 1995).

Marock (Dir. Leila Marrakchi, 2005)

Mean Streets (Dir Martin Scorsese, 1973)

Moitié du ciel d'Allah (*La*) (Dir. Djamila Sahraoui, 1995)

Montagne de Baya (*La*) (Dir. Azzedine Meddour, 1997)

Morituri (Dir. Okacha Touita, 2007)

Much Loved (Dir. Nabil Ayouch, 2015)

Nos lieux interdits (Dir. Leila Kilani, 2008)

Omar Gatlato (Dir. Merzak Allouache, 1977)

Où vas-tu Moshé? (Dir. Hassan Benjelloun, 2007)

Parle avec elle (Dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 2002)

Pépé le Moko (Dir. Julien Duvivier, 1937)

Pierrot le fou (Dir. Jean Luc Godard, 1965)

Rachida (Dir. Yamina Bachir Chouikh, 2002)

Repenti (*Le*) (Dir. Merzak Allouache, 2012)

Roma ouella n'touma (Dir. Tareq Téguia, 2006)

Sacrifiés (*Les*) (Dir. Okacha Touita, 1982)

Sur la planche (Dir. Leila Kilani, 2011)

Tabit or not Tabit (Dir. Nabyl Lahlou, 2006)

Tanger, le rêve des brûleurs (Dir. Leila Kilani, 2002)

Taste of Cherry (Dir. Abbas Kiarostami, 1997)

Terrasses (*Les*) (Dir. Merzak Allouache, 2013)

Trainspotting (Dir. Danny Boyle, 1996)

Un amour à Casablanca (Dir. Abdelkader Legataa, 1991)

Vent de Sable (Dir. Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina, 1982)

Viva Laldjérie (Dir. Nadir Moknèche, 2004)

Voleurs (*Les*) (Dir. André Téchiné, 1996)

Whatever Lola Wants (Dir. Nabil Ayouch, 2008)

Yasmina (Dir. Djamel Chanderli and Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina, 1961)

Z (Dir. Costa Gavras, 1969)

Zed Moultaka Beyrouth retrouvé (Dir. Leila Kilani, 2003)

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